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V

SEXAGESIMA—SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

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LENT: THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH SUNDAYS—PASSIONTIDE

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# THE CHURCH YEAR PULPIT LIBRARY

THE SUNDAY CALLED SEXAGESIMA
THE SUNDAY CALLED QUINQUAGESIMA
ASH WEDNESDAY
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
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# SERMONS, OUTLINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS FOR SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS

# The Sunday called Sexagesima

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## I. COMPLETE SERMON

### No Root.

*These have no root.* S. LUKE viii. 13.

HE similitudes between the world of nature and the world of grace are so many, and so close, that we can only attribute it to the unity of the mind from which they both proceed. It is the identity of a principle pervading everything which the same God has made.

The analogies which make parables are not what Jesus Christ, or any sacred teacher, make; but it is the necessity of the oneness of the character of a universe of a one great God.

Of these analogies, vegetable life is full. I take only one.

Feelings, joys, sorrows, emotions, are 'leaves.' Actions are 'fruit.' Grace is 'the sap.' Eternal principles are 'roots.'

The sap runs from the root; grace flows from the principles. The sap and the grace are both life. The sap rises and falls. So does the life. We see the leaves, and we see fruits; but we never see the 'roots.'

# SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

We see a man's joys, and sorrows, and professions, and actions; but we cannot see the motive from which they are springing. Yet—both in nature and in grace—what is out of sight is of far more importance than that which meets the eye.

The fruit cannot be without the leaves; nor fruit nor leaves without sap; nor the sap without the life; there cannot be a good life without right feelings; there cannot be right feelings without the Spirit; and there cannot be the Spirit without the hidden things of God down deep in the heart.

And if those hidden things be not, the Spirit cannot flow; the leaves will wither; no fruit can come to perfection. The root determines everything. And of dead hearts and dying hearts, the true mystery lies in one word,—they are 'rootless.'

I never knew a time in which it was more important for every one to ask, 'Have I roots?' 'What are my roots?' 'In what state are my roots?'

The foliage of the Church is lovely; leafy feelings are abundant; profession has shot up very high; and there are germs of fruit and buds of promise everywhere.

Many have felt great joy; some deep sorrow. Good resolutions are uncounted.

Will they live? Is there continuance? Do they draw supplies from the true spring? Is the vital principle there? Is there essential life? What of the 'roots'? What of the 'roots'?

When God planted His 'pleasant Vine,' David is careful to record, 'Thou didst cause it to take deep root.' 'The root of the righteous,' says Solomon, 'yieldeth fruit.' S. Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians is: 'That ye be rooted.' And when our Lord 'cursed the fig-tree,'—which had so much leaf, and no figs,—the judgment went straight to the first cause of all. And so it came to pass, 'In the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.'

There are some characters—impressible, eager, impulsive,—in which everything at once runs to leaf; they feel acutely; they express themselves strongly; they promise eagerly; they start rapidly. Others are slow; they seem to make very little progress, at first; they are very careful, perhaps too careful about making a profession; they are always dealing with the underground; the combination of both is, of course, the best, where one qualifies the other.

But where there is only one, that state of mind is infinitely to be preferred which has most to do with, and is most careful about 'roots.'

The question, then, is, What are 'roots'?

I should define the 'root' to be that which lying secret, far down, gives strength and steadiness to that which is exposed, and at the

same time supplies to all the other parts the nourishment which each requires for its life and growth.

The deepest 'root' of all is God's election. So deep, that it is really out of all reach and knowledge and ken of man, and yet it is the largest 'root' of all the 'roots.' If you are a Christian, the beginning of all beginning is that 'God chose you.' There you touch God. You build upon a rock. You entwine yourself about the Eternities of the Unchangeable.

I do not say that you are to attempt to handle and examine this 'root!' but when you think of it, it is an immense comfort and strength: 'God loved me from everlasting.' When all other 'roots' may seem to snap, you can hold to that. 'God, in His amazing love, chose me.'

Here, S. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, laid the base of his whole spiritual history. Here S. Peter began his first letter to the scattered tribes. And here our Lord planted our first confidence: 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.' 'All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.'

It is a doctrine to be used only for comfort. It is a doctrine not for the pulpit, but for the closet. It is a doctrine to be dealt with, reverently, on our knees.

But it is God's own truth. And there are times when nothing else will stand you in any stead. But it is the chain of 'roots' running down into the immensities of God: 'Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?'

Next, and only second to this, as a radical part of a believer's life, is a distinct knowledge, and a firm personal appropriation, of the scheme of salvation. Every one who wishes to continue in grace must have clear views of doctrine.

God having loved me (why, I do not know, but because He is love) gave me to His Son; His Son, dying for me, paid all my debt, cancelled all my sins, and gave me a perfect righteousness, bestowing upon me a title to heaven.

The Son, having saved me, gave me to the Spirit, that I might be made myself gradually holier and holier, till I was meet for heaven. And because I am not holy, even thus, the Spirit gives me back to Jesus, to be perfected in His perfections, which clothe me with a beautiful robe, and make me, poor sinner as I am, in God's sight, 'perfect.' And so Jesus presents me, and gives me back to the Father—who first gave me to Him—'complete.'

Or thus. Christ is a Head: I am a member. Immediately that I become a member, by an act of faith, simply because I take Him at His word, and believe that He died for me, my sins pass up to my Head; I am punished in my Head, and the life of my Head passes down to me, and by that life I live, and live for ever.

These are 'roots'—'roots.' If you do not see them, if you cannot say, 'They are mine,' you are not yet 'rooted in Christ.' Whatever you may feel, and whatever you may show, you will not stand. The right peace must spring from a right faith, and a right faith must rest itself upon God's own truth.

Necessarily and essentially, growing out of this 'root' is another 'root'—love. You are loved, and the ray must reflect itself.

I should not now make any distinction about whom you love—God or man, or whom. I mean, there is a melting, soft, loving frame,—it is what a sense of God's love always gives,—an affectionate compassion of the heart.

Of course it will go, at first, to God. But then it will widen its circles—everywhere. It becomes the motive power—'The love of Christ constraineth me.' The love of a heart that feels love, stretches out and expands itself to love every one, and to give expression of this feeling of a grateful heart everywhere.

That is a 'root.' The acts of love, the demonstrations of love are fruits; but that inner necessity to love, that tender heart is a 'root.'

I should have very little hope of the stability of any one's religion which was not a religion of love; which did not 'root' itself in love.

And fourthly. Here I see, branching out of this 'root,' another: a humbling sense of sin and weakness. I see it here because I know that humility is a shoot of love. We never do feel our guilt and nothingness until we feel loved and forgiven. The sense of being loved is the surest thing to put a man into the dust. And this feeling that we are nothing, and can be nothing, is a very great 'root.'

And it is thus that we learn to lean upon Omnipotence. If we do not, the connection will be cut off. It is a lesson which every child of God is learning every day he lives, more and more. When he thought to stand, then he fell!

By far the majority of those who fall, fall here. They were too independent. They did not know their weakness. They were earnest. They set out well. But they did not yet know themselves. Therefore, Christ was not in His proper place, and gradually they withered!

The little sapling standing there without the 'root' to connect it with the nourishment, drew nothing; and the sapling died!

I will only mention one more 'root'—the consequence or offshoot of the last—secret communion with God. Nothing will be a sub-

stitute for that. Services, Christian fellowship, Holy Communion, are all necessary parts of the divine life. But those are not 'roots.' The 'root' must go deeper. It must be something deep and hidden, a converse with God in the depths of a man's soul.

It consists chiefly in two things—the private exercises of your own room, and the little silent communications with God, which occur in your heart everywhere. If you do not keep up both these—earnestly and constantly—your soul must die!

There are sure to come winds and storms on the outside, visible life. If they are not countervailed by things which cannot be moved, nor touched, deep in the sanctuary of your own heart, you will be blown down!

After all, the spiritual life is what you are when you are alone with God. And you must go deep into your Bible once or twice a day, that you may take the mind of God into your thoughts. You must make private prayer a reality—a child talking to a Father and telling Him everything: the prayer the counterpart of the life. You must wait and you must listen for voices and for answers. You must go about breathing thoughts of God and to God. You must realise a Presence; and with that Presence you must hold constant, free, happy, affectionate communication. Without these 'roots,' nothing can grow; nothing can live.

Believe me, the heavenly life is something far above and beyond what most people think it to be. It is not feelings; it is not actions; it is not love. It is God. It is God in you. It is a spirit not your own. First, union; then communion; then light; then peace; then holiness; then heaven. The 'root' is God in you: what God is to you, and what you are to God.

Do you ask, How shall I know whether I have struck 'root'? Ask God to show you. I can offer you two tests.

Whatever is really wrought in God must grow. Growth is the proof of love. It is not what you are, absolutely, but what you are relatively to what you were some time ago. If you can say, 'I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I wish to be; I am not what I shall be; but I am not what I once was.'

God's work must grow. It is the law of its nature to grow. If you do not hinder it, it will grow. If there is no growth, there is a fault in the 'root.' And secondly, they say that 'the length of the branch is the measure and the extent of the root.' As the one spreads above ground, so in exact proportion the other stretches beneath it. How far do your branches go? How far are you extending an influence for God? Whom do you bring to live under God's shadow? Where are you exercising some deep power over another's soul? Who is picking fruit off you for Christ and His glory?

# SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

It is very easy—to be moved by the beauty of religion and the loveliness of Christ—even to tears!

It is very easy—to have a strong conviction of sin, rather for sin's sake, because it is so wretched, than for Christ's sake—because it is so dire!

It is very easy—to be good for a day, or a week, or a month!

It is very easy—to be carried away by the enthusiasm of the sympathy of many hearts!

It is very easy—to be impassioned for a while, and to mistake fervour for devotion, and the meteor flash of a new feeling for the 'breaking off the sin by righteousness!'

It is very easy—to receive with joy, and lose with levity!

It is very easy—to have seed cast upon a rock, and because it is rock—because the heart is still hard and unbroken—to have the early rapture of Christian joy, which shall die away into a desert!

I have seen many who have 'flourished like a green bay tree;' but I pass by to-morrow, 'and lo! they are not,' and 'their place is nowhere to be found!'

And I hear that sad sentence—that wail, sadder than the dirge of the grave, God grant that it may never be spoken upon any here, who are showing fair to-day their bright spring of early promise,—'These have no root!'

J. VAUGHAN.

## II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

### Self-Assertion.

*Howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, I am bold also.* 2 CORINTHIANS xi. 21.

TO S. Paul the work of self-assertion is a needful, and yet it is a hateful work. He does it, so to speak, under a continual protest. It is, he says, a folly with which he prays them to bear. He would have them not to think that it discloses his true nature, or breathes the spirit of one who speaks of the law; for, although it is in the defence of his apostolic mission and the truth with which he is charged that he speaks, yet after all an apostle is only a man, and there mingles with it the sadness of wounded feeling and the indignant sense of some personal wrong. And so again and again, as in parenthesis, every assertion is followed by the words 'I speak foolishly,' 'I speak as a fool.' And at last he turns upon them with an affec-

tionate reproach for having compelled him to become a fool in glorying, whereas they ought to have made such glorying needless by attestation in word and deed to his true apostleship.

I. This self-assertion, why is it thus characterised as a folly—want of accordance, that is, with the true laws of humanity and of the dispensation of God? Our own experience tells us that it is always a painful and an unwelcome work. Our hearts go along with S. Paul in his unwillingness and his protest. On the one hand, what seems the very courtesy of outward life in what we call good manners—too apt now, perhaps, to be lightly esteemed or even despised—is just the prohibition of self-assertion and the bidding to esteem others better than ourselves. On the other hand, our deepest experiences in our inmost self-reflection, either in the quiet solitude of thought and prayer or in the anxious crisis of responsible action—these things bring to us, with a certain solemn emphasis, the folly of self-reliance and of self-assertion. But why, after all, do we call it a folly? In ancient times men never thought that there was any folly in it whatever. The great master of Greek thought actually describes his high-souled man as one who knows well his own superiority, and asserts fearlessly his own dignity. The very spirit of manliness which all ancient freemen so highly prized is, if you consider it apart from other elements with which it is often connected, just a rightful self-assertion, finding out our place in life and determining to fill it, defending our right and glorying in our freedom, and even asserting our dignity. And in our own modern practice, although in conflict with some greater ideas that are due to our character and training, after all much of the old worship of this manliness remains. It is recognised as an element in our education, it is accepted as a principle of social and political life, it is almost gloried in as an evidence of strength and freedom of character. Those who, like the Apostle, are born to any leadership, to the lofty responsibility of power of any kind, to dignities that are not their own to sacrifice, to opportunities on which hang the destinies of nations—they have in a special degree this duty of self-assertion laid upon them. It is felt that they are ignoble and unworthy of their high calling if they neglect it. Dante, as you will remember, in a well-known passage, expresses indignant contempt for one who in false humility and cowardice made the great refusal, and failed to assert himself. No doubt, in the absence of antagonism, this self-assertion should be quiet and humble; but when antagonism rises against it the very conflict of forces brings out the latent power in full energy. 'Whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also.'

No, this is not folly when it is in its right place; but that place, as the great master of Greek thought has told us, is always a subordinate

place. There is in it the power of action, but it is to be guided and controlled by a higher power. The man, no doubt, is free, but his freedom is conditioned. He cannot pretend even for a moment to live or to die for himself. Whenever self-assertion comes into prominence it verges upon foolishness; whenever it becomes the leading principle of life it is the grossest folly.

II. Now, what is there that will keep it, and keep it because it keeps man in his right place?

There is one conception of life—and I know but one—which at once recognises self, and yet subdues self, and which, in S. Paul's phrase, enables a man to glory, and yet keeps him from becoming a fool, and that conception of life is the Christian conception. I know that in all godly life, be it what it may, there is a power, far above this lower conception of which I have spoken, at once to preserve and yet to subdue individuality. But still I say 'the Christian'; for in the Christian conception of life we have at once an all-pervading faith in God as the Author and Finisher of this great work. And yet we have that great truth which the Incarnation of Jesus Christ stamped ineffaceably on the dispensation of God, that there is a divine image in man through which, as S. Paul says in this very Epistle, he is called upon, not to be an instrument, but a fellow-worker with God.

There are differences of ministries but the same Lord. I believe that every man who is born into the world has a certain duty to do, little or great—as the world terms it—but a duty that is perfectly real. For it, I believe his special gifts are given, his span of life is ordained, and his opportunities are laid open. That duty is an element in the great dispensation of God. He is called to it; he must be bold to assert it against all that would supersede it and all that would hinder it.

There is one eternal Hand which guides the stately course of nature's unresting march and rules this troubled sea of our human lives and wills. In that Hand we leave every work that we have done in the strength of the one Spirit and the service of the one Lord. Out of the Almighty Hand no work will fall, and in that Hand it will never die; it is wrought into the very texture of God's own providence, and its little setting there will form one element in the glorious fabric, and in that eternal fabric it must live for ever and ever.

It would be folly to rest on our own poor isolated being; but it is wisdom, the happiest and the truest wisdom of life, to glory in the strength in us which is made perfect in weakness, to live our own life as the life that is 'hid with Christ in God,' safe from sin in His righteousness and safe from death in His immortality. BISHOP BARRY.

# OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

## Glorying in Infirmity.

*If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*
2 CORINTHIANS xi. 30.

ONE or two obvious remarks suggest themselves upon this passage.

I. And one is, as to the character of the Scriptures generally, in reference to their details of facts.

It has been often noticed that, if any one compares this enumeration with the record of S. Paul's life in the Acts of the Apostles, he will find himself directly at fault. Of all the particular sufferings here detailed,—imprisonments, scourgings Jewish and Roman, stonings, shipwrecks, scarcely one or two are described in the Acts prior to the twentieth chapter of that book, with which the writing of this Epistle corresponds. There is no contradiction between the two records: that is carefully to be noticed. The Epistle does not say, 'Once was I stoned,' and the history give the narrative of two such punishments prior to the time at which the Epistle was written. No contradiction: yet the list given in the Epistle is incomparably the fuller of the two. Learn then to read the Scriptures with intelligence. Admire the simplicity, appreciate the aim, with which they were written. All the books of Scripture are of what is called incidental character. The Gospels were not written to give a complete life of Jesus. One supplies what another omits; and, after all, an Evangelist himself says, that 'there were also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.' And in like manner the history in the Acts was not written to give a complete life of each of the Apostles; not even of the two Apostles principally spoken of, S. Paul and S. Peter. In each case specimens of the life are given; enough to exemplify the character and the history of the first disciples; enough to furnish models for later imitation, by illustrating the principles on which a Christian should act, and the sort of help and support from above which he may look for in so acting. Thus, too, the Epistles do not profess to give a systematic account of all Christian doctrine: there is nothing in any one of them like the formality of a Creed, or of a table of Articles of Religion: each one illustrates some new particular of doctrine and practice, but still in a thoroughly easy, occasional, and incidental manner, with reference to some particular want or circumstance of him or of those to whom each is addressed. The observation of these things gives a double

interest to the study of the Bible, and guards us against some serious misapprehensions and misapplications of its teaching. It increases our thankfulness to God, not only for the gift of His Revelation, but for the particular form and shape into which He has thrown it; so attractive, so natural, so well adapted to use, so consistent in all its parts yet so various, so plainly designed not to supersede all other teaching but to furnish a guide at once and a check to it, to give material for all Christian instruction, and still to demand care, skill, and patience on the part of all who would elucidate or interpret it.

II. Another remark, not wholly unconnected with this, is as to the style and general character of this particular passage and its context.

'Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.' It is what we call ironical language. And there is very much of this tone in these chapters. I am not going to dwell upon the remark: but I would beg you to notice what a very natural person S. Paul was; how he expressed strongly what he strongly felt; how he did not disdain even what are commonly called the arts of rhetoric in enforcing upon his hearers or readers matters which he knew to be important; how he did not allow a misplaced or morbid charity to keep him from exposing, as any human writer would seek to do, the fraudulent designs and underhand practices of those whose influence over a congregation he saw to be full of danger; how, like all those who have been set to do God's great work in days of unsettlement, and more especially of religious transition, he was in the habit of calling things by their real names, and of subverting error or unmasking hypocrisy by the most effective weapons which natural or acquired ability, under the control of Christian truth and love, could furnish for the purpose. I would bid you admire the natural man, while you listen to the inspired man. I would bid you recognise the wisdom of God's choice instruments, as that wisdom is here exemplified; and never forget, in reading the words of an inspired writer, that he was a man like other men in all natural dispositions, feelings, and passions, all the time that he was a man raised for certain purposes above other men by the predominating agency and constant presence of the informing and transforming Spirit of God Himself within.

III. But I must draw my third remark from the text itself, and thus prepare the way for its brief concluding enforcement.

S. Paul says, 'If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities.'

I fear these words have been sometimes much misapplied. People have spoken of glorying in their infirmities, as though they were using S. Paul's language, when they really meant something most opposite. They have applied the words, all but avowedly, to infirmities of temper and of character, as though the consciousness of sin were a

thing to be proud of; as though it gave them some claim to the estimation of Christians, to be aware of their own liability to sudden outbreaks or habitual unsoundnesses of prevailing evil within. But now observe the three things to which S. Paul here applies the term infirmity or weakness.

1. The first of these is suffering. Suffering for Christ's sake. Suffering of a most painful kind and a most frequent repetition. Bodily discomfort, bodily privation, bodily pain. Such was one part of his 'infirmity.' Suffering reminded him of his human nature; of his material frame, not yet redeemed by resurrection; of his sojourn in a tabernacle, the dissolution of which was ever going on, but which was not yet exchanged for that 'building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens'—in other words, for that resurrection body—for the gift of which he was ever waiting and watching.

2. The second kind of infirmity is denoted in the words, 'that which crowds upon me daily, the anxiety of all the congregations.' A keen sense of responsibility is his second weakness. The thought of his churches; of those communities of living men, women, and children, which he had been the means of gathering from among the surrounding Jews or idolaters to bear the name of Christ and to be His witnesses in the midst of an ungodly world; the thought of these communities pressed upon him every day with an importunate and almost overwhelming power. Anxiety about their welfare was always at his heart. He knew so much in himself, he had seen so much in others, of the malice and skill of the tempter, that, when he was absent from a congregation, and more especially from a young congregation, busy in the formation or in the charge of distant churches, he was distracted with painful care, and even faith itself was not enough sometimes to soothe and reassure him. He called this anxiety an infirmity. Perhaps, in the very highest view of all, it was so. Perhaps he ought to have been able (as some ministers are but too ready to do) to trust his congregation in God's hands in his absence. He called it an infirmity. But sure I am that it was a weakness for which we may well love him; a weakness with which we ourselves, in behalf of those committed to us, might well desire and pray to be oftener and more justly chargeable.

3. There was a third weakness, growing out of the last-named. And that was the weakness of a most acute sympathy. 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?' That is, Whenever I notice or hear of a weakness in the faith of any one, such a weakness as exposes him to the risk of fainting or failing in his Christian course, I have a sense of interest and concern in that case such as makes me a very partaker in its anxieties. I cannot get rid

of it by putting it from me. I feel that weakness of character as my weakness. I feel that weakness of resistance as my weakness. I feel that weakness of faith as my weakness. That is one half of my sympathy. But there is, along with this, another feeling. Who is offended, who is caused to stumble, who is tempted to sin, who is misled, or daunted, or persecuted, so as to be in danger of making utter shipwreck of his Christian hope, and I am not on fire with righteous indignation against the wickedness which is doing this work upon him. Sympathy with the tempted is also indignation against the tempter. They are not two things, they are one. Sympathy has two offices; towards the offended it is fellow-weakness; towards the offender it is indignant strength. But in its two parts combined, he calls the disposition thus described—calls it, perhaps, with something of that irony of which I have spoken, and which runs through the whole passage—an infirmity; one of the things which concern his infirmities; and on that account, just because it is not so much a strength as a weakness, one of those things of which he may be permitted, without offence to modesty, to make a boast.

IV. Finally, I would give a wider scope to the language of the text, and urge the duty and the happiness of saying, in the words of S. Paul, 'If I must needs glory, I will glory in those things which concern, not my strength, but my weakness.' The things on which we commonly pride ourselves are our advantages, less or greater; our talents, our gifts, our powers of mind or body, our estimation with others, our position in society, the pleasures we can command, or the wealth we have accumulated. But these things, by their very nature, are the possession of the few. Many can assert no claim at all to such grounds of glorying: all must lose it one day. S. Paul tells us how we may glory safely; how we may all glory; how we may glory to the very end. Glory, he says, not in your strength, but in your weakness.

For God's gift to us we may be thankful: but it is in His deprivations alone that we may glory. And S. Paul tells us why we may thus glory in our disadvantages, in our postponements, in our losses, in our bereavements. He says in another passage of this same Epistle, 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest (tabernacle) upon me.' And he speaks, yet again, in the same spirit, 'of bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,' being made like Him, that is, in His humiliation and in His death for us, 'that the life also of Jesus,' His living power as it is now put forth in His servants, 'might be made manifest in our body.' It is the dark side of life which brings us most closely, most consciously, into connection with the supporting and comforting help of Christ within. Everything that lowers the exuberance of animal

spirits, everything that tends to depress and humble us as merely human and earthly beings, tends also, if it be but meekly and faithfully borne, to show in us and to us how near Christ is, how loving, how real, how powerful. 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' Regard every painful point in your position or in your circumstances as an indication of Divine love; of a love as farsighted as it is tender; and be assured that it is so. Regard everything which you naturally dislike and fret under as a new motive for calling in Christ's help to bear it; and you will find it a stepping-stone between you and Him. He will cause His power to rest upon you, and by degrees you will be conscious of it. He will guide you with His counsel; He will uphold you with His arm; and at last receive you to glory.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

## What is Glory?

*If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*
2 Cor. xi. 30.

'DOUBTLESS it is not expedient for me to glory,' says S. Paul: and yet never did there live a man who had more of which he might have boasted. A long descent, whose ancestral dignity the Jew looked upon with something less of family than of religious pride; a civil station inherited not bought, which gave him the franchise of the greatest of earthly nations; brilliant talents and a philosophic mind cultivated by the care of the wisest teacher of his people; a prominent part in the political world, won by his ability at an unusually early age: all this added to boldness, zeal and perseverance, made him a marked man of his day; and in the peculiar crisis of his nation's history in which he lived must have drawn men's eyes to him as one qualified for some great thing—the one man, if there were any, who might have guided the public mind and headed some popular movement, which, if successful, would have rescued his nation from their subjection to the Roman power and placed them at his feet as their deliverer; or which, animated and sustained by his wisdom and address, and not deserted by him even in disaster, would have given him a name of glory and a place in the history of the world. This was no contemptible stake for an ambitious mind to play for, and much there was, as men would say,to glory in, in the gifts that qualified him for it. But this was past, the temptation of the world was departed. Never do we hear by a single syllable in Holy Writ any allusion to what he might have been as a hero among men. Yet still there is opening for a fall, for glory, for pride. He who tempted our Lord with all the kingdoms of the

world and the glory of them, and failed, tempted Him next to over-confidence and the perils of spiritual pride. But S. Paul, tempted thus, speaks of himself as 'one born out of due season'; he perpetuates the disparaging accounts of his personal appearance and his defective voice; he refuses the homage of idolaters, and rebukes those who would make him a leader among Christians; and when he cannot but record the facts of his ministry and the things he has done, he adds emphatically, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' We nowhere find him puffed up by his spiritual greatness, any more than we can detect one lingering backward look to the brilliant earthly career which was gone from him for ever.

I. And yet he does glory. He cannot help himself. He is one of those ardent souls whose energy is always finding utterance in noble deeds and honest words. And he knows that God has employed him marvellously in carrying on this great work on earth. But he will even here act as he has bidden others act. 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' The first declaration—that God had so pre-eminently chosen him—was followed immediately by the revelation of how great things he must *suffer* for His name's sake. And side by side with the triumphs of his zeal and the splendours of the victories of the Cross, there travels the shadow of suffering, of persecution, of bodily infirmity, of disappointment, of humiliation. These last he takes, and in them he glories. 'If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.' When he bids others follow him as he follows Christ, he does not forget, for himself or them, that Christ's was a lot of suffering. When he glories in the faith and patience of the Thessalonian Church under their persecutions and tribulation, it is no loud vaunt for them in a trial from which he shrinks himself. When in later days he bade S. Timothy endure hardness as a good soldier of the Cross of Christ, he did not speak with Pharisaic hypocrisy, laying on him a burden which he would not touch himself. Through all his converted life he fought the good fight of faith, though he did not glory in it till life was almost over. He takes the scorn and the contempt of men, he takes the imprisonment and degradation to which the service of Christ had exposed him, and he wraps them round himself as something more than a conqueror's robe; and, reflecting on the sufferings and the shame of Christ, he glories in afflictions, in persecutions, in imprisonments; nay, to sum up all in one word, he glories in the Cross of Christ.

II. 'If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.' How many of us can honestly say that? What need is there to speak with apprehension and warning of a different sort of glorying? There is a time that comes to certain

sinners, ay, and in some ways a fearfully early time, when shame turns to glory—when it is no longer suffering for Christ's sake the humiliation, the desertion, the isolation among men on account of religious principles fearlessly maintained, that is the cause of a holy gladness; but there is a time when men learn to glory in their sin.

What have you been glorying in? Brilliant gaiety? the deepest draughts of pleasure? the victories of beauty or of wit? What remains? A faded wreath, a jaded body, a weary mind. The Apostle's glorying was in his failures in all earthly hopes.

With us,

> 'That bitter sigh was all for earth—
> For glories gone and vanished mirth;'

with him earth had nothing to offer which he did not consider loss in comparison with Christ. The marks of distinction of which he boasted were the marks of the ownership of Christ. Come, and draw step by step nearer to the Cross, till you see and know Him who hangs upon it, and have grace to take up your own; and the more you learn of Him and of yourself, the more will you glory in the things which concern your infirmities, in the help which strengthens them, in the grace which supplies these needs; in the Love which was so concerned with them that it took them up itself; bore them, as your sympathising Friend on earth; bore them, with all their accumulated sins, as your Saviour on the Cross; bore them away for ever—and having borne your shame, offers you His glory.

G. C. HARRIS.

## III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

### The Sower and the Seed.

*And when much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city He spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed.* S. LUKE viii. 4, 5.

THIS parable of the sower, which was read to us as the appointed Gospel in this morning's service, stands first of all the parables that have been recorded by the Evangelist, and it can hardly be by accident that it is so prominently placed in the record of the Saviour's life. Not only is it the first in order of time, but it is primary and fundamental in its character, and, typical of our spiritual influence, it is indeed pre-eminently the parable of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. Through this symbolic utterance so

carefully explained by the Saviour to His inquiring disciples He declared that His work on earth was to sow the seeds of spiritual life in them. Here, then, He sets before us the method of His action upon the individual soul. Just as S. Paul took up the thought later on, in writing to his Corinthian converts, 'Ye are God's husbandry,' so the Saviour in this first description of His kingdom and His work had already said to us: 'Your soul is seed, and My mission, and the mission of all who come after Me in My name, is to sow the seeds of a new life in the soul.' This, it may be said, is a very elementary truth; it is but a silent lesson, but these elementary and primary truths are apt to be the most momentous of all. If we really apprehend this lesson of the sower, if we read it as with a personal conviction that this method of sowing in the soul the seeds of new life—or, as we might designate it, this method of new inspiration—is the condition of bearing with every one of us, and that it never fails or ceases, then there follows this result—that every soul of man or woman acquires a new interest and a new importance. Whatever its present life or powers may be, however feeble it may be or apparently worthless, the sense of the mystery that attaches to it, and our hope of its future can never die out of our heart, because we feel that we do not know as yet what germs of the Spirit may be destined to take root and grow in the soul.

I. The first three Gospels overflow with the simple spiritual lessons which are typified in this parable of the sower, which declare to us the secret of man's regenerated life in Christ, and in S. John's Gospel we have unfolded before us the revelation of the Incarnate Son, and the mystical communion of the Son with the Father, of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God; but there is no inculcation of any system of organisation and observance of doctrine such as Christian history has imposed again and again upon men, declaring it to be the one thing needful for the salvation of their souls. These developments of doctrine, these forms of government have their place, their necessary place, in the evolution of Christian society, and we may not depreciate their value as the framework and the support of our spiritual life; but let us always remember that the reality of that life of the Spirit is to be sought, and its value is always to be tested, through the seeds of growth which it exhibits—seeds sown in our hearts to-day as they were sown at the first by the direct nature and loving influence of the Spirit and Word of Christ.

II. That we may feel this with all the more conviction, and see also how intense and how concentrated was the Saviour's purpose as to the nature and the method of His regenerative work in the world, let us glance yet again at His attitude towards the life around Him.

Whereas there is nothing which so readily arouses man's passionate interest as the political struggles that are going on around him, He stood resolutely apart from these. We see Him gazing with divine insight over the whole field of human life, His heart pleading for its sin and its misery, feeling that the harvest was calling everywhere for the reaper, but uttering no kind of interference with established customs or institutions, living peaceably and urging no revolutionary changes, and yet all the while He was sowing seeds of love, and hope, and purity, and sacrifice, which were destined to do more than all other influences besides to revolutionise both the public and private life of every civilised community. He saw His countrymen degraded and oppressed by foreign despotism, and still more degraded by a wicked and sensual court and a corrupt priesthood; He saw ignorance, suffering, and ruin on every side, and the people at large eager, expectant, longing, and praying for their deliverer—everything, in fact, which, according to our feelings, would naturally stir the soul to indignant and revolutionary enthusiasm; but still we see how absolutely He adhered to His regenerative method, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' though that Cæsar was Tiberius, and was content Himself to go about sowing seeds of new revelation and of new life in the hearts of the simple and the poor. It is, indeed, a singular spectacle, this of the Saviour of men standing meek and sad in the midst of a world which was altogether out of joint, and hardly seeming ever to name or to touch what we should have expected Him to attack vehemently as the crying vices of the time—its cruelty, its sensuality, its slavery, its infanticide. But the spectacle loses its singularity—nay, the very singularity grows into a striking proof of the divine nature and insight of Jesus, and of the everlasting truth of His doctrine and method—when we observe, as it is very easy to do now that He has revealed it unto us, that, while He seemed to be disregarding the outer phenomena of the life around Him, He was, in fact, going straight to the roots and sources of all life and energy, and teaching us that no growth or progress is possible for us, whether in our own separate lives, or in the life of Church or State, except by planting the germs of a life which is higher than the common life in the new hearts of men.

III. As then, we see the Saviour thus presenting Himself with us as the sower of seeds of a new life in human hearts—such seeds as the revelation of our sonship to God through Him, seeds of devotion to His person, seeds of a life of consecration to His service, and of the hope of everlasting life; as we see Him withal standing apart from all questions of ecclesiastical organisation, and taking no side in politics, what inference are we to draw from all this? Assuredly, the meaning of it is that He intended us to see in it a fact that in

these germinal seeds of influence we have points of contact between our life and the divine life: through these we touch upon that region of the supernatural towards which our spirits are always striving. Assuredly He intended us to have this conception of His redeeming work—in other words, to take this conception of the divine purpose and method in regard to the spiritual life and progress of the human race. So it follows, as a practical conclusion, that whether we look to our own souls, or to the Church as a whole, or to the State and its Government, we must look beneath and within every form or framework of the outer life for the seeds of grace and regeneration, for that spirit of Christ which is working through these forms, of course, but not through these alone; it is working as the infusion of a new power that comes into the life of men—an influence that comes without observation, working as the leaven works, and growing with the growth of the mustard-seed.

So, we may carry away with us lessons of comprehension and tolerance, seeing that many who seem to be separated from us are really drinking of the same spirit of Christ, and the seeds of the true life have been sown by some divine hand in their hearts as in our own. So, also, we learn to apply the true test to every branch or division, or school or party, in the universal Church of Christ; its power and its growth are to be measured by the seeds of truth and love and sacrifice and personal consecration to the service of the Lord that are growing and bearing fruit in those who are enrolled as its members. So, finally, when we come to examine our own soul, the last question we have to ask is this: Has the first seed of life, sown in us long ago, been tended and quickened again and again—what of its growth and what fruit is it bearing? Of all the aspects in which the Saviour stands before us there is none which it concerns us more nearly to realise than this one, that He watches over us as the sower in our hearts of the seed of everlasting life.

BISHOP PERCIVAL.

## Jesus Christ's Classification of Human Hearts.

*And when much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.*—S. Luke viii. 4-15.

CHRIST'S classification of human hearts.—1st, the Indifferent; 2d, the Frivolous; 3d, the Impure; 4th, the Simple.

I. Our Saviour reduces human dispositions to four different classes, and among these four there is only one to which he gives the name of good, and which really belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The others consist of those in whom the divine word is bringing forth no fruit. How inconsiderable, then, is the number of true children of the kingdom in comparison with the false ones! It is a serious thought, which may well warn us and lead us to examine ourselves. Instead of so many believing that they have already, by mere outward adoption, become children of the kingdom, should they not rather with fear and trembling say to themselves: In a kingdom where the unworthy members are so much more numerous than the worthy ones, is it not more probable that thou art belonging to the unworthy ones?—a thought which may keep us throughout our life in wholesome humility.

The first division which He separates from the great multitude of unbelievers consists of those whom He compares with the wayside trodden under foot. As the sower sowed his seed, He says, some fell by the wayside, and was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. He afterwards explains this Himself: 'Those by the wayside are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.' We have designated this class as the Indifferent, and it is unfortunately the most numerous of all. Our Lord describes them by S. Matthew as those who hear the word, and do not understand it. It is sown upon their hearts, and not in their hearts, and therefore it is given up to any one who will take it away from them. Who among us is not acquainted with this class of people? They walk along the broad road of this earthly life. They are scattered in all stations of life, among educated and uneducated, intellectual and unintellectual, honourable and dishonourable, and we have here an example of the way in which our Lord throws together into one class those who to human eyes are diametrically opposed to each other, for the reason that they are all agreed in their conduct towards the divine word. To such as these life is a walk and not a journey. It is unimportant to them whether they arrive at a definite goal; they only ask for the invigorating air on the way, to delight themselves with the sight of the beauties around them, and in cheerful conversation with those about them.

These men certainly hear the word of God, but cannot in the least understand it. The kind of thought which governs it is so decidedly opposed to their own,—they have no point of sympathy with it,—that they cannot at all penetrate into its signification. According to their view of life, the gospel is to every one a mystery. To the man who considers that he owes to himself alone an account of his life, and on this account thinks he need have regard only to the question whether by his own fault he has failed in procuring himself enjoyment, nothing can appear more superfluous or indifferent than a

Saviour. Such a man hears the word from Him as he would any other novelty, and looks upon it as a matter of indifference whether he keeps it in remembrance or forgets it.

II. The second class—the frivolous hearts, which are likened unto a rock, 'receive the word with joy.' Why not? It is certainly a lovely gospel. But what is the good of that? It does not regularly take root in them. The divine word takes root only in the heart which is softened and moistened in the tears of daily humiliation. Without humiliation the heart is of stone, even if a little soil does lie upon it, —the so-called good and natural emotions and feelings. The divine word must strike root, down to the deepest ground of the heart to grow entirely through it. Otherwise the heat comes on, the heat of distress and trouble, and more especially the heat of life, and it is withered. In such a case the gospel brings no consolation, so long as suffering for sin is not the greatest of all sufferings, and the source of every other, and such persons, these frivolous ones, play a strange part in life. They stand forth without character, which only the decided believer or the decided egotist can have. The gospel is to them still law. They feel oppressed under its burden, and revolt.

And here we will be warned. It is not the approbation which our understandiug bestows upon Christianity, nor the satisfaction it gives to our feelings, nor a few pious emotions which can make us secure, and work the conviction that we are already truly Christians. There is no Christianity without humiliation—none really without daily humiliation. Without it devotion is wanting in sap, the inner principle of life in itself.

III. Similar to these last, and yet differing from them, are those in the third class. In our parable they are likened to a field bearing thorns and thistles. These are the Impure hearts. They distinguish themselves from the second by having been really born again, while the others have not. They have gone the way of humiliation,—they have learnt to believe in humiliation. But their heart is impure. They have not quite given place to the Saviour; they have reserved this and that sinful joy and pleasure, this and that so-called favourite sin and weakness. At first perhaps it was scarcely perceptible, and they themselves were hardly conscious of it. But this weed has grown up with incredible rapidity. They have not had their natural heart made quite bare and pure; they have allowed weeds to grow up, which the heavenly Father did not plant. They bring forth fruit, but none which is ripe. Their spiritual life is gradually choked in them, and at last is entirely quenched.

The lesson lies very near us: To keep the soil of the heart quite pure for the Saviour. Purity before everything else.

R. ROTHE.

# OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

## The Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven.

*And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be?* S. Luke viii. 9.

THIS chapter contains the first parable which S. Luke has reported. That parable may be called in one sense the parable of parables. S. Matthew and S. Mark both put it before the others; both connect it with a special explanation, and with the reason which our Lord gives for teaching by parables generally.

This message, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand,' is the message of the gospels. It came to the Jews as a message which they expected. It came as a perplexing overthrow of their expectations. They wanted a kingdom in which a Jewish emperor should crush the nations as a Latin emperor did crush them. They were told of a son of David who was in the midst of them—that Son of David spoke of God as His Father. It was His Father's kingdom which He said was at hand. Into that the poor in goods and the poor in spirit might enter. It was, no doubt, a kingdom that was to come. The glad tidings pointed to a future for those who were on earth, to a future for those who should leave the earth. But the kingdom was over those to whom our Lord and His disciples preached. They might feel the powers of it. Those powers had come forth to do them good.

I. In the parables every fact in nature becomes a fact of humanity, a fact of divinity. We have the solemnest protest from Him whom we believe to be the Creator of both worlds, against any disparagement of either and against any attempt to sunder them. There is a discovery to us of an unfathomable meaning and mystery in their union, a meaning and mystery to which the peasant has as much access as the doctor. The Kingdom of Heaven is shown to be at hand—to be presenting itself to the spirit of a man as the trees which his fathers planted, as the firmament under which he walks, present themselves to his eye.

Nowhere is there more of this revelation than in the parable of the sower. 'What might this be?' asked the disciples with some impatience. To what does it point? What does it tell us of the heavenly kingdom which Thou art making known to us? Before they had the answer, they surely had learnt something which it much concerned them to know. There might be a mystery beneath the sowing of the seed. But there was a mystery in that. They were dwelling amidst mysteries. Look what the sower in the field is about. What a simple business he is engaged in! Only scattering a few tiny seeds over the ground. What will happen to those which have dropped by the wayside? The birds already have got sight of them, in a few moments they will be gone. Will it fare the same

with those which have fallen on the soil that is so near the rock? No, there will be a promise in them, the blade will come up quickly. But do not expect anything from it. When the sun is strong it will wither. And that which is fallen among briars or weeds; what of that? Both will grow up together; the wheat will be choked; there will be no produce. But think again of the process which the seed will have to go through that does spring up and bear fruit. How long will it remain underground? When it appears, how unlike it will be to that which was put in. Yet it will be the same. And it will come at the regular season, according to a fixed order. And it will give bread to the eater, fresh seed to the sower for the next year.

Here you have, assuredly, the very reverse of dogmatic teaching. It is emphatically teaching about facts, about common facts, about the facts of the outward world. It awakens the mind of the hearer to observation and reflection. 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.' You, who want to learn what there is in you that answers to these processes in the ground; who is directing these processes: what there is that answers to the seed which is sown in the ground; who is the sower: you can learn, poor men, ignorant fishermen as you are. But to others who do not care to know this, who are not feeling their need of one to sow and plough the soil which is in them, all these things are in parables. They see the images. They do not see that which the images represent. They hear all the messages which nature is bringing to them, all the thousand voices which are sounding through the world, but they do not understand.

II. What if seed lies in vain? That question is suggested by the parable. Perhaps it is the one which comes most home to us. Often we stammer in answering it. We say, and say truly, that the grace of God is directed to the will of man; that it comes with no force like that which might move a stone; that it can, therefore, be resisted. Such assertions are confirmed by our own experience, and the experience of all men. The parable obliges us to consider them. It obliges us to say, 'The fault is not in the sower, or in the seed, but in the soil.' If that were all, would not the conclusion be a despairing one? Who is to rectify the soil? The soil; what soil? Do we not find in our own hearts all the obstructions which we denounce in the most indifferent, the most unbelieving? If so, we must ask, for our own sakes, 'Was it not promised that the Son of Man, that He should baptize with the Spirit? Does He merely sow the seed? Does He not also fit the ground to receive it, to entertain it, to return it, not as it was taken in, but in the richness and pregnancy which it owes to the divine rain and sunshine?' Are we then to despair because Christ's word has been ever so much checked by that which it has met within us? Is it not part of the revelation of the

Kingdom of Heaven, that the word shall accomplish at last that for which it is sent; that if our wills be ever so unattractable, there are resources in the divine will by which it can subdue them to itself?

F. D. MAURICE.

## The Mysteries of the Kingdom.

*And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.* S. LUKE viii. 9, 10.

I. TAKEN as they stand, these words do seem to sanction the cruel distinction between the initiated few and the uninitiated many, and it is natural that we should shrink from attributing to our Lord what appears to be so much at variance with His spirit, and so out of keeping with His merciful mission. For this is He who never broke the bruised reed or quenched the smoking flax; this is He who came not to blind, but to enlighten, not to destroy, but to save! Calvin, indeed, has not shrunk from affirming that this was our Lord's meaning, and that he intended to instruct the few and not the many. It is no doubt conceivable that He withheld again and again from self-satisfied hearers the truth they had unfitted themselves to receive; but it is not conceivable that He made the reception of divine truth difficult to those whose minds were open to it. If the hearts and intellects of men were straitened, it was not in Him, but in themselves. The hindrances to fruitful hearing were not of His making, for was not the refrain of His ministry that He would, but they would not? On His part all was readiness, condescension, accommodation. All things were ready, the feast was spread. If it was spread in vain, the fault was not in the giver, but in the guest.

II. But as a matter of fact and experience, do the parables conceal the thoughts and the grace of Christ? Do they not reveal them? When we think what the parables can do, and have done, it is difficult to imagine that they can have been spoken under any circumstances in order that seeing men might not see, and hearing they might not understand, lest at any time they should turn to God, and love that which He commands, and desire that which He promises. And it is just the multitude, it is just the simple and unlettered many, those who are least versed in spiritual lore, those whose theological learning is scantiest, to whom the parable appeals. Being the most picturesque, it is the most stimulating and winning form in which divine truth can be presented to their minds.

It was not to blind but to enlighten, not to drive away but to win —to bring man to God, not to keep them from Him—that Jesus

Christ taught in parables. S. Matthew, therefore, enables us to understand the merciful meaning which underlies this apparently hard saying in S. Mark and S. Luke. When we look at the reports of the evangelists, and carefully compare them together, we can have little difficulty in seeing what it was that He taught us, and what part of His answer it was that made the deepest impression upon those who heard Him. It may be said that the parable, like our Lord's whole mission, indeed, on earth, was a test which served to reveal the thoughts of many hearts. No more hopeful method of bringing home the mysteries of the kingdom to the multitude could have been devised. Their dulness, their spiritual immaturity and incapacity, was the reason for its adoption. In fact, our Lord tells His disciples He had recourse to it in order that if it came to the worst they might remain as they were before—blind, deaf, and impenetrable. He bids us observe that the parables are, in fact, illustrations of that principle which determines universally the bestowal of spiritual good: 'Ask and ye shall receive;' 'Seek and ye shall find.' To those who are seeking light, light is given; while those who neither care for it nor seek it are left in darkness.

In the words before us it seems to me that a trace, a tone of bitter disappointment might be found on the part of our Lord that the utmost He could do to reach the hearts of men would be in vain; that after all was said and done many would remain untouched and untaught, incapable to the last of understanding the mysteries it so deeply concerned them to know. To Him who would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, what could have been sadder than to watch the effect of His words on those who were devoid of the honest and good heart, and to know that those words which were spirit and life to the truth-seeker were a savour of death unto death to the careless, the hardened, and the self-satisfied? 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken that which he hath.' Our Lord has made nothing clearer than that this law governs the whole spiritual kingdom, and takes effect through every individual probation. It is one of Lord Bacon's profound sayings that every parable has both a revealing and a concealing power. He who hath—he who not only hears with the ear, but understands with the heart—has more given to him; but he who hath not—the hard and sensual, in whom there is no spark of spiritual desire nor trace of meekness to receive the engrafted word—loses even that which he seemeth to have. The very teaching which opens the eyes of others only intensifies his blindness; even the poor, confused notions of spiritual truth which have survived a life of vanity are further bewildered by the teaching which floods purer souls with light divine.

CANON DUCKWORTH.

## IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS.

### The Temptation in the Garden of Eden.

*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* GENESIS iii. 1.

HEN we cast a glance upon the sacred narrative in this chapter, there is one thing which seems to emerge at once to the view—and that is, that the writer of the narrative intended to imply, by his language, the existence and operation of a personal agent. I do not wish to dogmatise upon such a subject. But surely, if we come to the study of these verses of the Book of Genesis without any prejudices to influence us, or any theory to maintain—the first impression made upon our minds will be such as I describe.

I. Notice first, that the tempter is admitted into the garden. The garden was not a sacred enclosure, which he was forbidden to enter. It was not meant then, any more than it is meant now—that human beings should be protected from the assaults of temptation. Not the virtue which stands because it has never been tried, but the virtue which has passed through trial, and come triumphantly out of it—this is what God demands, and expects at the hands of His creatures. Just as it is with us now, so was it with our great mother, Eve, temptation met her in the ordinary walk of daily life, and when she was occupied with the tasks which God had given her to fulfil. She had not wandered away into some specially perilous region. She may have been—I think she was—intellectually a child; but she had a moral instinct that must have given her warning, and must have hinted pretty plainly that even to parley with such an interlocutor as this was a deviation from the path of duty. Clearly, what she ought to have done, was to have turned away at once from a being who cast a covert slur upon the character of her God, and to have refused to hold any further communication with him.

A point of resemblance between the first temptation and all subsequent ones, is to be found in the injecting into the mind of suspicions about God, especially with reference to the prohibitions which He imposes upon us. In our better moments we can see that these prohibitions are intended for our good, that they are really evidences of the divine love and care and watchfulness over us, and that the

great Father would never really deny His children anything but what He knows it would be injurious to them to possess. But when God puts limits to our self-indulgence, or (it may be) warns us altogether off from certain regions of enjoyment, is there not sometimes a feeling in our heart akin to that inspired by the tempter into the heart of Eve? and are we not sometimes inclined to suspect that the Creator grudges to see His creatures happy, and that there must be something exceptionally delicious about the fruit of the forbidden tree, inasmuch as it is so carefully guarded and placed beyond our reach?

II. Consider, in the next place, the results of the temptation—I mean the results that appeared at once, and which are indeed the types and forerunners of all the results of successful temptation which we see in the world around us. The first is, a shrinking from the presence of God. Up to this time, it had been a delight to Adam and Eve to go forth and meet their Heavenly Visitant, when He descended to converse with them. Now, as soon as they are aware of His approach, they flee from Him and hide themselves among the trees of the garden. And are we not reminded by this circumstance of our own natural recoil from personal contact with God?

III. The instrument which the tempter employed to make his temptation successful was falsehood. He persuaded Eve to believe a lie. And Satan uses precisely the same weapons now—falsehood, but falsehood with a certain admixture in it of the element of truth.

G. CALTHROP.

## The Origin of Evil.

*Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* GENESIS iii. 5.

I. WHAT is evil? It is the opposite or negation of good. In the abstract, evil may rightly be called want of conformity to whatever is the true standard of good. In the concrete, it is anything which comes short of what is perfectly good. Evil has no positive existence of its own; there are evil spirits, but they are only because they come short of the glory of God. There are imperfect things in nature, but they are only evil in relation to man; they are but signs that the creation itself is passing through progressive phases in obedience to the controlling thought of God. Evil is therefore simply a negative idea. It is entirely relative to what is good, and is merely our necessary way of stating that in some cases where good ought to be, good is absent. 'Nothing in nature is in itself evil,' said S. Augustine, 'and the name of evil only means the falling short of what is good.'

Now it will help us to clear our ideas if we take the usual and well-known twofold division of evil into physical and moral. Physical evil means what is opposed to good in the sense of happiness; pain, suffering, disease, death. By moral evil we mean what is contrary to good in the sense of uprightness or virtue.

Physical evil is by God's ordinance, the consequence of moral evil, and frequently the outward exponent of that which is in itself hid from created vision. Physical evil is in some cases the punishment which is made to fall on the being who has been guilty of the fault. Physical evil, again, may often be the means of preventing moral evil by securing the opposite good. It may become not merely the healer of wickedness, but even a subsidiary or intermediate good. It is rather moral evil about which we desire to know what has been thought of its origin.

II. Why does evil exist? Three different classes of suggestions have been made: the first by those who held that there are two equal and eternal powers of good and evil, and who are called Dualists; the second by those who believed that everything, whether it seemed good or bad, was alike a manifestation of the divine being—these are called Pantheists; the third, those who believe, with the Bible, that God alone is supreme and almighty, that evil is utterly abhorrent to Him, but that it is not an independent kingdom of itself, but rather the result of freewill falling short of His all-wise, all-beneficent, all-glorious purpose.

S. Augustine taught on this tremendous problem, that 'the cause of evil is to be found in the will which turns aside from the higher to the inferior, or in the pride of those angels and men who turned away from God, who has absolute being, to themselves whose being was limited. Not the inferior as such is evil, but to decline to it from the higher is evil. The evil will works that which is evil, but is not itself moved by any positive cause. It has no cause which creates it, but only a cause in its own deficiency. Evil is not a substance or nature, but a marring of nature, a marring of the good, a defect, a privation, a loss of good, an infraction of integrity, of beauty, of happiness, of virtue; where there is no violation of good, there is no evil. Evil therefore can only exist as an adjunct of good, and that not of the good, which admits of no change, like the goodness of God, but only of the good which is liable to variation, like the goodness of angels and of men. An absolute good is possible, but not an absolute evil. A kingdom of good exists, but not a kingdom of evil. To make such a supposition is foul treason to the glorious majesty of God. Evil does not disturb the order and beauty of the universe; it cannot wholly withdraw itself from subjection to the laws of God; it does not remain unpunished, and the punishment

of it is good, inasmuch as thereby justice is executed. As a painting with dark colours rightly distributed is beautiful, so also is the sum of things beautiful for him who has power to view them all at one glance, notwithstanding the presence of sin, and even though when considered separately, the beauty of individual things is marred by the deformity of sin. God would not have created those angels and men of whom He knew beforehand that they would be wicked, if He had not also known how they would subserve the ends of goodness. And thus the whole world consists, like a beautiful song, of oppositions.'

And if we turn to the Bible itself, we find these noble and consolatory teachings of S. Augustine abundantly borne out. The Bible tells us that evil did not originate either with God or man in this world, but was brought hither by a spirit who had previously fallen in some other part of the universe, who was the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. The Bible fully authorises the chief conclusion to which reason can come to on this dark and painful subject. The Bible teaches that God is not the author of evil in any sense: the expression in Isaiah, 'I create evil,' merely means trouble in opposition to peace. It teaches that there are spirits with perverse wills, and men with perverse wills, and a state of punishment for both, but that there is no such horrible dream, as ignorant men have popularly supposed, as a kingdom of evil from which they borrow their badness. The perverse wills of spirits, the perverse wills of men, the state of punishment, all are under the control of Almighty Wisdom and Goodness. The Bible teaches that though able to prevent evil, God has, in accordance with His other purposes, permitted it to exist. It teaches that the evil permitted in the universe is not only less than the good directly willed by God, but is characterised as something intrusive and transitory, while the good is fundamental and permanent. It teaches that God in permitting evil has not left it uncontrolled, but ever holds it in His power and makes it subservient to His purposes until freewill is swallowed up in perfection. It teaches that He will ultimately overrule this evil which He has permitted, so as to evolve a larger amount of good for His universe than would have been possible had freewill not been permitted. And it teaches that all that is perplexing to us in the existence of evil men and evil spirits arises out of the limitation of our understanding; and that as in the natural world many phenomena, which to the untutored mind appear anomalous, are by the philosopher seen to be in accordance with law and necessary parts of the system of the universe, so the phenomenon of evil spirits and evil men, which is to us so full of difficulty, may by higher intelligences—must by the highest—be seen to be in perfect accordance with the noblest order and the purest rectitude.

ARCHDEACON SINCLAIR.

# OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

## God calling to Man.

*And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*
GENESIS iii. 9.

'THE Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?' There is the speaker—God, the Lord God. There is the person spoken to—Adam, the first man; Adam, from whom we all sprang; the father, and the likeness, and the representative of us all. There is the nature of the address—a call, a summons, decisive, authoritative, majestic. There are, at last, the words uttered: few and plain, yet, when looked into, big with meaning—'Where art thou?' And we shall not end without appealing to all of you, to each one of you separately to answer that question; to answer it truly, as we shall all have to answer it one day.

I. Now I shall not use many words about the speaker. There are those who profess to doubt the being of God; and there are those, on the other hand, who profess to prove it. I shall not suspect you of the one, and I shall not endeavour to do the other. I am quite sure that in your inmost hearts you do not doubt His being; and I am quite certain that, if you do, I cannot prove it to you. The being of God is not a matter of argument, it is a matter of instinct. The doubt or denial of it may pass muster with scoffing men in robust health and prosperous circumstances; but nine out of ten of those same men, finding themselves in sudden danger, by land or sea, from accident or disease, will be heard praying: they may conceal it, they may disown it, they may be ashamed of it afterwards—but they did it: and that prayer was a witness, an unimpeachable witness, that down in the depths of their heart there was a belief in God all the time; in their works alike and in their words they deny Him, but in their inmost souls, like the very spirits of evil, they believe and tremble. God, then, speaks here. I tell you not who He is: you know it; you know that there is such a person, your Creator, your Ruler, your Judge: happy if you know also that He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. Now, to whom does He here speak? I will say two things of His call as here described. First, that it is an individual call; and, secondly, that it is a universal call. We try to make God's call a vague one. It is for some one, no doubt; but every natural man tries to put it away from himself. In hearing a sermon, every one thinks how suitable this reproof or that warning is to his neighbour; he goes away to wish that such a person had heard it, to hope that such a person listened to it; but the person who thus hopes, and, probably too, the person thus hoped about, never thought of taking it home—never said to himself, though he was but too ready to say to another,

'Thou art the man.' Nevertheless, God's call is an individual one. The only use of it is to be so.

But this individual call is also universal. Let us not flatter ourselves that we are more to God than others are: it is a very common, though a well-disguised notion. We think that our souls are more important than any others; and that is the least form of the error: but we go on to think our faults more excusable, our sins more venial, than those of others; we go on to think that God will spare us when He does not spare others; we go on to think that our virtues are greater, our self-denials more meritorious, than those of others; and by this time we have got further away from truth and the gospel, than the poor self-accusing, self-condemning sinner who feels, and denies it not, that he is yet in the gall of bitterness, in the very bond of iniquity.

The call of God, like the care of God, is universal. It is to the race. It is to the creatures. Hear the word: 'The Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him.' If it had been, God called to Abraham, or to Moses, or to David, there would have been some particularity, perhaps some limitation, in the summons; but none of us can say he is not included when Adam is spoken to: he is, indeed, the father of us all: of him we all come. What God says to him, He certainly says to us—to us all, as to each of us.

III. But we ask, perhaps, thirdly, How does God call to us? I will say, in three ways. He calls within—*in conscience.* He calls also without—*in providence.* I really know not whether this be not the most persuasive of all His modes of calling to us; certainly it is the most authoritative of all. Conscience may be stifled, but Providence grasps us very tightly—we cannot escape from it. Once more, God calls from above also—*in revelation.* I suspect that is why we so often leave the Bible unread—just because we believe it; we feel, when we do read it, that it is God's voice, and we do not want to hear that voice. The Bible is more its own witness than we like oftentimes to admit.

IV. God speaks; and speaks to us—to each of us and to all of us; and speaks, chiefly, in three ways—in conscience, in Providence, in revelation: and now, fourthly, what is His call? how is it here briefly expressed? It might have been put, it is put in the Bible, in different forms—but how is it here expressed? 'The Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?' This is a call, first, to *attention.* As though God had said, Listen to Me. That is the first step in all religion. What we want first is a spirit of attention. It is the great art of our enemy to keep our thoughts off religion. That is the meaning of the overwhelming cares of life. The devil would occupy our whole time and thoughts with something which is not,

and has nothing (as he persuades us) to do with God. That is the meaning of the excessive amusements of life. The cares of life are not enough to engross the attention of all men always; and therefore the enemy provides something which shall alternate with them for some men, and take the place of them for others. It is this art which God, in His mercy, in His longsuffering, in His desire that we should not perish, has to counteract by His divine skill. He takes a man aside now and then, from time to time—blessed be His name for it!—and makes him listen. He interposes by some chastisement, some sickness, some bereavement, and constrains him to hearken what He, the Lord God, has to say concerning him and to him. This is the first point gained. Behold, he listens! better still, Behold, he prayeth! It is a call, next, to *the recognition of God's being*, and of our responsibility to Him. 'Where art thou?' It is as if He had said, I am, and thou art Mine.

It is a call, once more, and yet more particularly, to reflect upon our place or our position. I know not how else to express the force of the inquiry, 'Where art thou?' It may be read literally—of place. But, even if the literal local question could be well answered, there would remain yet another behind applicable to all men. 'Where art thou?' is an inquiry as to position no less than place. It says, 'What is thy present place as a man with a soul, as an immortal being? What is thy present standing, thy present state? Art thou safe? art thou happy? art thou useful? art thou doing the work I gave thee to do? Is it well with thee in the present? is it well with thee in future? Say not, I cannot answer, I know not. I have taught thee how to judge of thyself: now therefore advise, and see what answer thou wilt return to Him that made thee.'

V. Lastly, let us all answer this question. It is a very serious thing to do; and it is what no man can do for his brother. Each one of us has one secret place, one sanctuary within the veil, into which, not even once a year, not even in the character of a high-priest, can earthly foot ever enter. Yet in that secret place shines forth the light of God's presence; a light never put out altogether in any man, so far at least as its disclosing and revealing character is concerned, until sin and perverseness have done their perfect work, and the awful words are at length fulfilled, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!'

The work of God in each of us would be almost accomplished, if this one call were heard within. Once let us know that God is speaking to us, and that He waits an answer; once let us feel that He is, and that He has a right in us, and that He cares for us, and that He is seeking us, and that He will have us to be saved, and all the rest will follow.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

# SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

## Hidings.

*I hid myself.* GENESIS iii. 10.
*I flee unto Thee to hide me.* PSALM cxviii. 9.

IN those two texts, we have what is outwardly the same action—the action of hiding. Adam is hiding. David is hiding. And yet between the act of the one man and that of the other there is all the difference which must exist between things which are morally wide as the poles asunder. The one is hiding himself; the other is hiding in God. Adam hides in fear. David hides in confidence. The one text shows us the sinner's flight; the other the saint's refuge. Let us consider both.

I. Let us contemplate the sinner 'hiding himself.' For is not this flight and concealment of Adam among the trees of the garden like a symbolical representation of what sinners have been doing ever since?—have they not all been endeavouring to escape from God, and to lead a separated and independent life? They have been fleeing from the divine presence, and hiding themselves amid any trees that would keep that presence far enough away.

1. One of the most common retreats of the sinner is that of complete thoughtlessness. What countless thousands of human beings have fled to this retreat; and how easily and naturally does a man take part and place with 'all the nations that forget God!' We have said complete thoughtlessness; but it is not complete. If it were, there would be no conscious hiding—no more flight: the forest would then be so deep and dense that no divine voice would be heard at all, and no divine visitation of any kind felt or feared. But it is not so. Now and again a gleam of light will come piercing through. Now and again a voice from the unseen presence will summon the fugitive back. But would not a man's deepest experience, if he would speak it out, find expression sometimes in Adam's language, 'I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.'

2. The occupations of life furnish another retreat for man when fleeing from God. Man works that he may be hidden. He works hard that he may hide himself deep. The city is a great forest in which are innumerable fugitives from God, and sometimes the busiest are fleeing the fastest, the most conspicuous to us may be the farthest away from Him. What a mass of secularities will a man pile up sometimes between his soul and God! and how affecting is it to follow him even for one day in his flight! He flees from his chamber in the morning that the spirit of seriousness may not settle in his heart.

He flees from his house without having felt its highest charm, without having thought of the fatherhood of God, and of the home on high. And all the day he is fleeing—on and on—through the cares and calculations, through the profits and losses, through the intercourse and the correspondence, and all the management and all the toil of the day—he is fleeing.

There is not one thing perhaps which he does during all the day that, in itself, is wrong—which might not indeed be nobly and spiritually right. Work is right—the allotment of God, the best discipline for man. Trade is right—the dispenser of comforts and conveniences, the instrument of progress and civilisation; and from these things actual benefits unnumbered do unceasingly flow; and yet there can be little doubt that the case is as we say. These right things are used at least for this wrong end—as a screen, a subterfuge, a deep retreat from the voice and the presence of the Lord.

3. The moralities of life form another retreat for souls hiding from God. Some men are deeply hidden there; and it is hard to find them; harder still to dislodge them. This does not appear to be an ignominious retreat; a man seems to retire (if indeed he may be said to retire at all) with honour. He is yielding an outward and mechanical compliance to laws, but he has not the spirit of them in his heart. He endeavours, but he does not hunger and thirst, after righteousness. He is not without morality, not without many amiable and excellent qualities, but he is without God in the world.

4. The forms and observances of religion constitute sometimes a hiding-place for souls. Men come to God's house to hide from Him. They put on 'the form of godliness, but deny its power.' They have a name to live, but continue dead. They seem to draw near, but in reality are 'a great way off.' They figure to themselves an imaginary God who will be propitiated and pleased by an outward and mechanical service—by the exterior decencies of the Christian life—when all the while they are escaping from the true God, whose continual demand is 'My son, give me thine heart.'

II. Adam is the type of the flying sinner. David is the type of the fleeing saint.

Here we have the very heart and soul of conversion, 'I flee unto Thee.' The man who says this has been turned, or he is turning. He has heard a voice which has indeed convinced him of his sin and of his nakedness, but also of his folly in trying to find a hiding-place from the universal presence—a shelter from the all-penetrating eye. And now (thinking that he heard some tenderness mingling with authority in the call), he has turned, and sees a father's face, and the open shelter of a father's presence, to which he may flee; now he hears, not merely the arresting call, 'where art thou,' but the winning,

heart-melting invitation, 'Come to Me and I will give you rest'—'come to My presence and you will have a safe protecting shelter from all the evils you dread.' And here in the text is the answer to that invitation—'I flee unto Thee to hide me.'

1. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me' from the terrors of the law. He alone can hide us from these terrors. But He can. In His presence we are lifted, as it were, above the thunders of the mountain; we see its lightnings play beneath our feet. Or rather, as the Apostle puts it, we are not come at all to the mount that might be touched. We have been there. We have seen its dread revealings. But now we come to another mountain, where God reveals a still fuller presence—to Mount Zion, the place of His rest, where no thunders crash, where no lightnings play, where no darkness lowers, around which are the breathing airs of mercy and the musical whisperings of love.

2. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me' from the hostility and hatred of men. This was a flight that David often took, and in fact this is the fleeing mentioned in the text. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me.' Then he is like a child who has come fainting in from a winter storm, and is now cradled and sleeping in a parent's breast. If you have David's faith, you have David's refuge. The name of the Lord is a high tower, into which all the righteous run and are safe.

3. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me' from the trials and calamities of life. There are many such trials that come to us in our passage home, even if we have no enemies; 'if all men speak well of us,' better far than we deserve; if we have 'honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,' we are not to think it strange if we have troops of trials too. But what are these trials, under His management, but troops of friends as well? Each one of them carries blessing.

A storm comes to a ship in mid-voyage. She is driven far out of her course, and is glad at last to find shelter in some friendly port. But there would soon have been shipwreck in the fair weather. The sunken rock, the unknown current, the treacherous sand, were just before the ship. The storm was her salvation. It carried her roughly but safely to the harbour. And such is affliction to many a soul. It comes to quench the sunshine, to pour the pitiless rain, to raise the stormy wind and drive the soul away to port and refuge, away to harbour and home within the circle of divine tranquillity—in the deep calm of the everlasting presence. God will keep His people in this position until all these earthly calamities are overpast, and the cry is heard no more from any, 'I flee unto Thee to hide me,' but all unite in saying, We will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

4. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me' from the fear and the tyranny of death. This is the very last flight of the godly soul. It has

surmounted or gone through every evil now but one: 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.'

Will you go, as a solitary traveller, into eternity, and meet all its terrors and sublimities alone, or will you have 'the Eternal God for your refuge, and around you the everlasting arms'?

A. RALEIGH.

## Cowardice and Cant.

*I heard Thy voice . . . and I was afraid.* GENESIS iii. 10.

I. 'I HEARD Thy voice . . . and I was afraid.' The words are Adam's words, spoken after that first sin, which we are told about in to-day's first morning lesson. Was Adam a coward when he uttered them?

Yes, he was—a conscience-made coward, like many a one after him. He is a coward after his sin, not before it; in his rebellion against God, and not in His service. And the same thing has been true in the case of thousands of his children. For fear is the unhappy first-born of sin. It is not religion that makes man a coward, but the want of it. We do wrong, and then 'conscience doth make cowards of us all.'

But while in Adam's mouth the words of the text are the words of a coward, in themselves they are not, by any means, necessarily so. They might well be, under different conditions, as, doubtless, they have often been, the words of the bravest, truest spirits breathing. For, over and over again, absolute fearlessness is found to go hand in hand with, even as it is the direct outcome of fear—the only fear which has no trace of shame in it; holy fear, the fear of God—the fear of sin!

'He feared man so little because he feared God so much,' was once said of a great Indian statesman. Who could desire a better epitaph—a nobler record of a finished life? It describes a man who stands a head and shoulders above the common run of men—a man in a generation, perhaps. One who has confidence in himself, and inspires confidence in others. One who would regard an invitation to do wrong as an insult, so jealous is he of the honour of God. Who, in answer to the seemingly bold, but really uneasy taunt of the scoffer, 'What! you're afraid, are you?' looks his accuser in the face, and answers, 'Yes; I am afraid. I am not afraid of you, or of any man living, but I am afraid of God, and afraid to do what He forbids.'

If a man is truly religious, he is, he must be, above all things a

fearless man. And yet many a man—many a young man especially—shrinks from being marked down 'religious,' because he imagines that religion is not manly enough for him; because some have told him, and he has believed it, that it is all cant and cowardice!

Now let us say a word about cant.

'I hate cant,' a man says, and thinks that he has, therefore, given a very good reason for despising religion. Now the sentiment he expresses is a very good one, as far as it goes. Every honest man should, and does hate cant. But what is cant? Let us see.

Literally, cant is whining—practically, it is unreality. Well, there is religious cant—and this is of two kinds.

II. Some people make religion, and a stock of religious phrases, a cloak for their evil lives. This is cant, and of a very bad kind.

Others, again, who are very far from being hypocrites, uncharitably condemn, nay, anathematise, innocent amusements, and many things, which though innocent in themselves, are abused by many. Of course, we can make anything sinful; but to condemn cards and theatres, for instance, as in themselves works of the devil, is to give, not the enemies of religion alone, good reason for identifying religion with cant.

But now, do people ever stop to consider that there is at least as much cant outside of religion as ever was found within it? And the very people who cry out against religious cant make a very liberal use of cant of their own. It reminds one of the old story that tells how the philosopher Diogenes paid a visit to a brother philosopher, Plato, and finding the other amid luxurious carpets, and other comforts, entered his room with the remark, 'I trample upon the ostentation of Plato.' 'Yes,' answered Plato, 'with an ostentation of your own.'

Now the man who speaks of sin as 'seeing life,' 'enjoying life,' 'being a bit fast,' and so on, is canting, and in a very mischievous way.

Not only is the religious man a braver man than the godless, but he needs to be. His is the harder life. God, the angels, God's people, do not at least jeer the wicked man, subject him to petty annoyances, make his life a burden to him, but the religious man must stand out against all these patiently.

J. B. C. MURPHY.

# OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

## Influence.

*And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?*
GENESIS iii. 13.

I. WHAT is the real secret of exercising a good influence over others. The highest, purest, best influence is that of those who think less of what they are to others than of what they themselves are to God. Keep God before you. Act for God. Live as under the eye of God. Do all as if His gaze was fixed upon you, the least things as well as the greatest, and you will do most good to others. It is the Apostle's rule, 'Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' You cannot help witnessing for Him while you live for Him. Others will feel where your gaze is fixed, and their gaze will follow yours. The presence of a sovereign is felt as soon as he enters the room, even by those who have never seen that sovereign; his presence is made known by the manner of the courtiers gathered about him. If you move as in the presence of the King of heaven and earth, others will feel the greatness of that presence. The more true you are to God in your own inner heart and life, the more you will lead others to live for God. If we may say so with reverence, and it is reverence, this was the secret of God in the flesh, this was so with the influence of the highest, purest, most blessed life that ever was lived, the life of our Blessed Lord Himself. It was not by words only that He taught the world. Perhaps it was not more by words than by acts. Marvellous as were the proclamations that fell from His lips, the revelations of His life were at least as marvellous. Even in His earliest years, before the active work of His ministry began, He drew men's hearts to Himself. There was a moving, melting, winning power about Him as He lived to God in the relationships of family life. Men watched Him in His quiet home, they were attracted to Him, they loved Him. 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' In His after-life we may gather how strong was His influence over those whom He was pleased to call 'His friends.' We see in S. Mark's Gospel how our Blessed Lord's very looks and sighs were noticed, and treasured up in the hearts of those who were blessed with close intercourse with Him. And that life has been ever since the model and pattern of life to all Christians. It has changed the ways, the thoughts, the principles of thousands. It has transformed and transfigured men. It has raised and purified them. And how is this? We speak of our Blessed Lord being the example of men. He is so. But why? Not because He set Himself so to live

that He might show them how to live. No, but because He was Himself as man true to His Heavenly Father in all things. His gaze was fixed on God. His mind was bent on God. His powers were devoted to God. He lived in communion with God. It was His joy, the strength and refreshment of His spirit to act for God. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.' And the influence of that life, hid in God, told on others. It came gleaming out in compassion and sympathy and tenderness, and indignation at sin, and hatred of evil, and labours of untiring love, and gladness of submission. It was and it is the light of the world.

There is no need for us to go out of our place to reform the world. Still less is there any need that we should set ourselves up proudly as leaders for others to follow, or that we should criticise and condemn and censure. Each in his own house, in his own circle, with his own friends, in the even round of the duties of life, we have a field of influence more vast than we can imagine: and each one that is true to God cannot fail to use that influence for God. It is an old saying that he who would reform the world need only begin with one person, and that person is himself. And there is no one that lives a holy life who will not shed some holy influence round him. There is no one who has not some influence. Perhaps those who think they have the least very often have the most. Think what has been the case with yourselves. It may not have been the most clever and brilliant of your friends, most likely it was not those who were loudest in their professions, in all probability it was not one who was a great talker, who has done the most for you in leading you to God. It is far more often the quiet, the humble, the gentle, the retiring, from whom we learn, we scarce know how, the best lessons of life. Those who have never spoken a sharp word to us with their lips often rebuke us more loudly by their own silent lives. They never tell us of our faults, but they make us feel them. We are not afraid of them as we are of others far less holy, and yet we wonder how they can let us come near them. We know ourselves better when we are with them, and, what is more, we know God better, for God is with them, and they with God, and their power to move us is greater than that of those who astonish and surprise the world. It is with them just as it is with the scenery of nature. We stand at the foot of a lofty mountain, and we are astonished at it. We are awed and subdued, and filled with fear, as its crags tower above us. But when we walk along some soft English valley towards evening, as the sun's last rays fall on the sloping turf of the green hillside, we are melted, and softened, and moved, and we turn aside, half ashamed, to brush away the tear that will fall down the cheek, for the whole place seems like a revelation of the tender and loving beauty of God. We have friends whose lives are

like the soft lowly valley, and there is no influence like the pure stillness of this character.

II. If, like Moses, we are communing with God, like Moses we may reflect His light on others. The very gifts we ask and receive from God will overflow to others. There are some at least who watch our daily lives. There are some who still remember us in their daily prayers, as he who night after night, though far away, knelt down and thanked God that as a boy at Eton he had known Richard Seymour. There are some who watch our daily lives, yes, and there are some who love us—if it be only one or two true hearts. What would it be to help to lead them right, to make them seek and love God more, to make them braver and bolder on the side of God, to draw them above the world to Him? Imagine their saying to us, 'What is this that thou hast done?' We should never have loved God but for you; we should never have sought God but for you; we should never have found God but for you; and then our answer, it must be so, saying, 'No, no; it was not we that did this for you, but God. It was He who made you, who taught you to know yourself and find all your being in loving Him. He redeemed you, and counted His own blood not too great a price to shed upon the Cross that He might dwell in your heart and lead it to God by the power of the Spirit of God. He sought, He fed, He washed, He made you for his own, in His own way. But oh! the joy of feeling that He has made use of us to bless you, that as of old the shadow of Peter passing by fell on the sick and healed them through the power of God, so a look, a tone, a word, an act of ours should have had a healing virtue put into it by God to heal your souls.' Then, as we turn to God, we say, 'O God, what is this that Thou hast done?' After so many sins of my life, and failings in my service, the coldness of my heart, and the transgressions that might have banished me from Thy face, again and again, can it be my husband, my wife, my friend, my brother, my child, my companion, here by my side, has had something done by such a one as me? Hast Thou shone through my darkness and granted light to this soul? 'O God, what is this that Thou hast done?'

DEAN RANDALL.

## The Battle of the Seeds.

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* GENESIS iii. 15.

THESE words are the proclamation of that great and bitter war, which has been going on ever since the world began, in which we are all engaged, more or less, and which will end only in the final triumph of Christ.

And it is remarkable, that the first note of the gospel, the announcement of the great scheme of our salvation, and of its vast issues, is to be found, not in a declaration of mercy to man, but in a defiant message of mortal conflict to the great adversary.

It marks the indignant anger which God felt about the invasion which had been made against the peace and happiness of His creatures, that His first act, after the fall, is to pronouce sentence upon the tempter.

Let us see, then, the exact relation in which man and Satan stood to each other at the moment when God said the words. It was a relation of perfect friendship. They had drawn together far too close. The evil spirit had spoken kindly and flatteringly to the woman, and the woman had yielded up herself and her husband to his fascinating influence. They had both of them adopted Satan's views, and believed Satan's propositions. There was too much peace. Hence the power in the future of this first, grand prophetic promise, 'I will put enmity.' At that moment no enmity existed. It had not begun, at least on man's side. And it was from the good things which were yet to come to man, and from the bad things no less to come to the deceiver: 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

The position of things once recognised—that the war had not yet properly commenced, but that its beginning was announced as a thing to come, which should be to man's benefit and to Satan's hurt, we can go on to the development of the promise.

Only notice generally this, that the first intention of the work of Christ upon this earth is a declaration of war: His warfare and our warfare: the warfare of persons, and the warfare of 'seeds'; of the two great principles of good and evil; and of all in whom those two great principles should ever be recognised. It is the earliest record of our religion, that it is a religion of hostility, a battle to the death! that 'enmity' begins in an act of omnipotent grace and power which, 'puts' it into the dull, sluggish, senseless breast of man. And it is continued until one or other of the opposing powers is destroyed. At the best it is not without pain, and suffering, and discipline, and detriment to those who are God's 'seed'; but, at the last, it is certain ruin and destruction to Satan and to his 'seed.' But in all cases the universal law is a law of war. The persons and the 'seeds' can never be found but in severest opposition.

I. But we turn to ourselves, in whom the two 'seeds' are blended. The worst possible position in which men can be placed is a state in which there is no inward spiritual conflict. In them the fulfilment of the great promise is not begun. They are exactly where the fall

left them, in accord with evil, quiet and at ease! The predicted war, that appointed harbinger of all peace, is not commenced. God has not yet given them the precious gift of 'enmity.'

What then? There cannot be two principles at work. If there were two antagonistic principles, there must be clashing, and tumult, and conflict. But they have none. Therefore there is only one element at work. And what element is that? Nature, only nature, unredeemed nature.

I never feel unhappy about any one, unless I hear that he has no fears, and no spiritual trouble. When I find that, I am anxious for him while he lives; and I tremble for him when he dies! I despair of no man, except the man in whom there is no conflict. In that man can the Holy Ghost be? Could the spirit be there and not contend? And could there be contention and the contention not felt? God says, 'I will put enmity.' Where is the 'enmity'? If no 'enmity,' where is covenant? If no covenant, where is hope?

But how shall I not congratulate those, and pronounce them happy, in whom the great campaign is even now going on, who feel 'the plague of their own hearts,' and to whom the balance seems to hang, every day, tremblingly, between life and death; to whom 'when they would do good, evil is present with them,' and who 'see a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members,' who feel so linked and knit to all that is bad, that their cry is, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

They cannot be dead, else, if they were dead, could they struggle for life? They cannot be quite cold, for, if they were torpid, they would not feel their coldness! There must be 'the new man,' if the 'old man' is so disquieted. The new nature is created there; there is no surer evidence. God is carrying out His own undertaking. The 'enmity' is begun; that soul is alive. By the very token of its cry, we know that the new-born infant lives. I need no other proof. You are at war. The two 'seeds' are there. And they are, as they ought to be, and as they must be, in combat. Therefore, 'the one seed' is Christ. Happy soul!

And the fiercer that contest rages the happier are you. For, the more 'enmity,' the more earnestness; and the more earnestness the more reality; and the more reality the more life.

You may always calculate this, that the more you stir yourself, or rather the more God stirs Himself in you, the more shall Satan stir. The degree of the animosity of the one is the measure of the presence and the love of the other.

So long as you sleep, Satan will sleep, or feign to sleep! It is

your waking that first wakens him. And, all the while, his efforts will be in exact proportion to yours.

Do you say, 'It is very distressing, and very humbling, this constant "bruising." I feel "bruised" all day, and when I lie down on my bed at night I am "bruised" by my thoughts during the night'?

Go in peace. He cannot touch the vital part. He may hurt you in your body—he may hurt you in your circumstances—he may hurt you in your friends—he may hurt you in your pursuits—he may hurt you in your feelings; but these are only the accidents in the spiritual life. The Head is quite safe!

But you say, 'Should not the enmity and the malice decrease? But with me it increases! and the more it increases, the greater the conflict, and the more the conflict, the greater the enmity.'

Decidedly it does increase in a child of God.

Understand this, growth in the spiritual life does not lie at all so much in the diminution of the power of the sin, as in the increase of the power of the grace, which controls the sin. At any moment, withdraw the grace, and the old sin would spring up, as rampant and as strong as ever it was. The battle may grow hotter, in many it does grow hotter and hotter, even to the gate. But all the while the peace may grow, and the end is sure, though the way be very dark.

For all along it is Christ's warfare. He and Satan—the two great seeds of all light and all darkness—are only making your heart the scene of action. And between these two there can be no doubt which will come out the conqueror. 'Only believe.' Believe in God's message to you to-day—'Your warfare is accomplished.' And it will not be very long before our great Joshua will bring all those vanquished ones out of their caves of darkness, and will call on His own elect, and will say to them, concerning those once tyrannising giants, 'Come near, and put your feet upon the necks of them.'

J. VAUGHAN.

## Paradise Lost.

*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.* GENESIS iii. 22-24.

IT is much better not to 'know evil.' I do not speak of doing evil, or seeing it, or even thinking it, but he is happiest who does not 'know evil.'

God must 'know evil,' for it seems as if it were necessary, to be

was a keeper of sheep: and he brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. Was there anything in the material of the two offerings which made the one acceptable and the other offensive? Have we any right to say this, apart from the express language of Scripture? any right to say, as some have said, that by bringing an animal in sacrifice Abel showed a clear perception of the true way of atonement, and that by bringing of the fruits of the earth Cain proved himself a self-justifier, a despiser of propitiation—proved himself, as some one has strongly expressed it, the first Deist? I think that in all this we are somewhat in danger of adding presumptuously to the record of Scripture. We are nowhere told that worship by sacrifice was a primæval ordinance of God. If God enjoined it upon our first parents; if He even intimated to them (as some have imagined) by the coats of skins with which He clothed them, that the sacrifice of animal victims was the acceptable mode of approaching Him; then indeed the offering of Abel was in itself an act of obedience, and the offering of Cain, in its very form, a proof of presumption. We must be contented to leave this part of the inquiry where the Word of God has left it. In the absence of express guidance there, we dare not assert with confidence that it was in the material of the two offerings that God saw the presence or the absence of an acceptable principle. In proportion as we lay the stress of the difference more upon the spirit and less upon the form of the sacrifice, we shall be more certainly warranted by the inspired Word, and more immediately within the reach of its application to ourselves.

We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews the following description of the offering of Abel. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh;' not only at the time of his death, when the accusing voice of his blood cried unto God from the ground on which it had fallen, but still—still after many centuries—testifying to the one distinguishing principle and the one supporting hope in which God's people from the very beginning have all been one. It was by faith that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. It was because of the presence of faith in Abel that God had respect unto him and to his offering. It was because of the absence of faith in Cain that to him and to his offering God had not respect. Here we are upon sure ground. Here we are speaking only where God, and so far as God, has spoken first. God saw in Abel a spirit of faith: and in Cain God did not see a spirit of faith.

II. It was by faith that Abel offered to God, and it was by want of faith that Cain failed to offer to God an acceptable sacrifice. And so it is now. The bodies of us all are here: and right sounds

issue from our lips; right sounds, and the same from all: what then can be wanting? Why is the worship of one accepted, and the worship of another disregarded? Why? Because one has faith, and another has no faith. And what is faith? 'Faith is,' as the chapter just referred to tells us, 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Faith is, the looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Faith is a spiritual sight of things spiritual; let us rather say, of Him who is invisible and eternal. In daily life, faith is the setting God always before us; the walking before God; the doing and saying and thinking all things as in His presence; the having Him more powerfully present to us than the attractions or the temptations or the provocations of things below; the being able to say, and to act upon the resolution, 'This will I do, for I fear God'; and again, 'How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?' More especially is it the consciousness of Christ; the being assured, the remembering, and loving to remember, Him who died for us and rose again; and the actual endeavour to set our affections on things above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God. This, carried into its consequences, is the daily life of faith.

And now what is it in worship? How does faith enable, or the want of faith forbid, a man to offer an acceptable offering? How was it that Abel offered? how was it that Cain did not offer? Surely, the worship of faith is the concentrated energy of the life of faith. In worship a man who has faith is not only remembering God as a check upon sin, or as a motive to diligence, or as an encouragement to hope, or as a stimulus to watchfulness; not only thinking of Christ as One who is, and is all-powerful to help, and all-sufficient to make reconciliation, and long-suffering to our infirmities and our backslidings; but also, making application to Him as such; entering into His presence as such; communing and interceding with Him as such; making use of His sonship and of His redemption; gaining new supplies of grace and strength, from Him whom he knows as his Father, through Him whom he knows as his Redeemer and as his High-Priest in heaven. This is faith as exercised in worship. Where God sees this, there He has respect to our offering: where God sees not this, to that person and to his offering He has not respect.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

# OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

## Seedtime and Harvest.

*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* GENESIS viii. 22.

SUCH was the gracious and lovely promise which we read thus early in the history of the human race. As the penal waters ebbed from the world, which they had purified, God said, in the simple anthropomorphic language of the ancient narrative: 'I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth.' It would be an error to suppose that the rainbow was then first created. That lovely phantom, as you know, is nothing but the division of light into its seven-fold elements by the refraction of the sunbeams in the unnumbered water-drops; and so long as the sun has shone, and the raindrops have fallen, and the human eye has been what it is, so long must there have been rainbows. But what is meant is that then first did God teach the sons of His human family to look up to the rainbow as the natural emblem of His mercy.

I. Seedtime and harvest—the words, first and most obviously, bring back to our memories the thought of the happy seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter—each rich with its unique blessings, the dance of the circling months each garlanded with its peculiar flower, and each season and month is necessary for the growth of the harvest. In the autumn the ground is furrowed with the plough, and the sower goes forth to sow his seed. His task is hard as he toils over the brown earth, and the birds of the air follow him ready to snatch away the seed. But he sows in faith, and the land is harrowed, and then man, having completed his task, leaves the rest in humble confidence, to God. Soft rains fall, snows lie thick over the cheerless earth, the glebe becomes hard as iron with the frost; it seems as if no life could survive in these buried grains. Months pass, and there is no sign of life, but then, with absolute certainty, in each recurring season, the tender, feeble blade pierces the hard soil, and drawing nourishment from earth, and rain, and sunshine, it grows first into the milky ear, then, rising strong upon its hollow stalk of burnished gold, it bows with delicious shiverings under the balmy wind of June, and then, over leagues beneficently fertile, ripens its golden grain for the food of man. The order of plants to which wheat belongs is called the cereals, and the cereals, in the form of barley, corn, oats, rye, maize, rice, millet, furnish food to all mankind. In the form of rice alone they provide the staple nourishment of, perhaps, more than one-third of the human race. Truly, then, is bread called the staff of life: and for all the bounteousness of its yearly supply; for all the

miracles which work together for its production; for the knowledge which God inspires for its cultivation; for all the rich discoveries whereby man putting forth his pomp, his power, his skill, and arts, that make the fire, and flood, and air the vassals of his will, spreads the white wings of his vessels, and is able to disseminate from continent to continent over the rolling seas; for the precious opportunities of material life, which bread maintains; for the infinite loveliness with which the gift is accompanied; for all God's manifold mercies to us, I trust that, sincerely and with humble hearts, we thank the Giver of all good to-day—'The earth is full of Thy mercies, O teach me Thy statutes.'

II. Seedtime and harvest—all these things, while they are so obviously a merciful boon, are also, as our Lord has taught us, a continuous parable, for the life of man also is full of seedtimes and harvests. The man is what the youth makes him, not by any arbitrary intervention, but by a spontaneous law. Reckless youth makes rueful age, self-indulgent youth makes suffering age, idle youth means ignorant age, wasteful youth means needy age, guilty youth means remorseful and miserable age. What multitudes spend their fair early years, years so rich in hope and so full of promise, in making all their later years securely miserable. That is why, I suppose, the Arab proverb says that 'the remembrance of youth is a sigh.' That is why of sad words of heart, or of pen, the saddest is this, 'I might have been.'

Seedtime and harvest. The moral of this belongs, not only to the young, but to all of us, and it is, that all seed means ultimate fruit. Good deeds and evil deeds are alike infinitely diffusive. Take the case of good deeds: their influence spreads like perfume, like light, like sound. Like perfume—hide but a grain of musk for years in a room, and though the air of the room be often changed, and the musk suffers no sensible diminution of weight, the room will be still scented. Like light—'How far yon little candle throws its beams! so shines a good deed in a naughty world;' a good deed is the light of a beautiful example to which men may raise their eyes for generations yet to come. Like sound—blow a horn among the hills and the blasts shall come back to you again and again in multitudinous echoes before they die away.

III. Our subject to-day naturally leads us to illustrate the same solemn truth of good and evil deeds by the metaphor of sowing. It is a legend of Brittany that all the harvests of the land came from one single wheat-grain brought in the beak of a single robin. It is even thus that the seed of well- and evil-doing spreads. In Australia there are leagues on leagues covered and rendered useless by stubborn, gigantic, impenetrable thistles, and it is well known that all sprang

from one single thistle brought over by a Scotsman, and planted in his garden. It is even thus that the tares of evil-doing spread, and, as the proverb says, 'nettle seeds need no planting.' A single act of kindness has sometimes been handed on from generation to generation, just like the kindled torch in the torch races of the Greeks. It is astonishing how much goodness goodness makes. It is a beautiful truth to think of. But we must remember that there is a reverse side to it. It is even terrible to think of the extent and multiplicity of wickedness that may be the ripened crop of one bad word, or one bad deed. A legend tells us how the traitor Judas once did a good deed; he gave his cloak to a leper in the streets of Joppa, aud, for that one touch of mercy, he was allowed every year to cool his burning tongue on an iceberg in the North Sea. And every deed of evil also bears its evil harvest of curse and misery; until its germinative power has been slain by our own repentance, it too shall bring forth its evil fruit; and in this world as in the next it remains an awful certainty, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Every deed of ours is a seed planted in heaven or in hell. And is not this the moral of the parable of the harvest? 'Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten of the fruit of faithlessness;' 'but now sow to yourself in righteousness and reap according to mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till He come and rain righteousness upon you.' DEAN FARRAR.

## V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

### The Sin of Idolatry.

*Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.* EXODUS XX. 4-6.

THE Second Commandment forbids a different sin from the first. The first secures the worship of the true God by excluding all other so-called gods; the second goes a step further and forbids the worship of Jehovah under any image or symbol. So important is this prohibition considered to be by God Himself, that it is supported by a special threat of His wrath on those who disobey it and their descendants, and by a declaration that God's mercy will be

shown to thousands of generations of men who love Him, and who show their love towards Him by keeping this commandment.

The subsequent history of Israel shows that this commandment was very necessary for them. In the wilderness they began to worship God under the image of a calf—they dishonoured Jehovah in the fashion described by the Psalmist: 'Thus they turned their glory into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay.' This worship of the golden calf was not a transgression of the First Commandment—it was not the worship of a false god, but of Jehovah Himself under the form of a calf. And this worship of the calves was a perpetual trouble in Israel. When Jeroboam wished to prevent the people from going up to Jerusalem, he did not dare to set up any strange God, but he instituted the feast of tabernacles at Dan and Bethel in honour of God who brought them out of Egypt, and he introduced the calf as the symbol of Jehovah. So, throughout the writings of the prophets, we find remonstrances against calf-worship, though it is always recognised as a less grave sin than the worship of the gods of the heathen, and a marked distinction is drawn between the worship of the calf and of Baal.

I. The primary meaning of this commandment no longer needs enforcement. There is no longer any disposition to worship Jehovah under any symbolical form, whether of a calf or anything else. Even if anywhere excessive honour seems to be paid to pictures and statues of our Lord or His Mother, this can hardly be strictly said to be a breach of the Second Commandment. For the essential sin, against which the Second Commandment is directed, is the low conception of the Divine Being which is involved in representing Him as adequately symbolised by any created thing; and this would not be involved in any excessive reverence for statues or pictures, which only attempt to portray Christ's humanity. When God came in such a form, that He could be seen and handled as the Son of Man, He satisfied that craving which in earlier ages required restraint. He showed that God could be seen and known and worshipped as man without danger of idolatry. No doubt pictures and images of Christ may be held in a superstitious reverence, and may in that way weaken our sense of unseen realities. But it would be as uncharitable to stigmatise the reverence paid to them as idolatrous as to call our regard for the relics of a dead child or friend idolatrous. Iconoclasm, under whatever guise it poses, is as wanting in lucidity as it is in charity; while the faults of character which it breeds and fosters are certainly far more serious than any which it is likely to cure. It is possible, but only just possible, that a very uneducated Christian might think that the material atoms composing a painting or statue, which represented Christ, were more sacred in themselves than the atoms composing a chair or a

table. Such an idea would show a certain confusion of thought, but it would not involve a breach of the Second Commandment.

II. The Second Commandment has still a meaning: it is the safeguard of the imagination. It bids us, first of all, think of God as He has revealed Himself—as the Father; it forbids the misuse of the imaginative faculty in thinking of Him as other than He is. This is its deepest lesson. It is the germ-thought which prescribes all high and reverent thought about God. God is to be honoured with our imagination. And then, in order that we may make it capable of honouring Him, its use is to be strictly restrained; it must not run riot and construct false views of life, or paint false and bad pictures within us and dwell on them. It needs restraint; it needs also cultivation. It can never be said too strongly that to use your imagination aright you must spiritualise it. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,'—they and only they. You must keep its delicate fibre untarnished; otherwise you cannot see that which is, the real, the Divine.

The Second Commandment is the safeguard of the imagination; it keeps us true to high conceptions of God: it forbids us to imagine Him as a God from whom we should shrink if He were a man—a non-natural Being; it forbids any degradation in our thought of Him. In order to lay hold of its spirit, we must discipline the imagination so that we may be able to use it aright: we must train it by keeping it from degradation, but especially by filling it with all that is beautiful and true. For both in the disciplining of the imagination in ourselves and in the training of it in others, the 'Thou shalt not,' the mere laws of prohibition and restraint are of little use. Practically we shall find that the only way not to exercise the imagination wrongly is to exercise it rightly. If we would keep it from base uses, we must put it to noble uses. 'We must walk in the Spirit' if we are not to 'fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' The divine law for us is positive. The grim sign-posts that keep us out of the woods by assuring us that guns and man-traps are to be found there, will not give us of themselves the benefits of healthy exercise: they may keep us from dangers, they will not give us fresh air. The only way of keeping the imagination from poison is by presenting it with its true food. Give it real loveliness to dwell on and it will reject the sham, the pretentious, the unworthy.

CANON EYTON.

# SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

## The Name of the Lord

*Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.* EXODUS XX. 7.

LIKE the Second, the Third Commandment had a special significance owing to the circumstances in which it was first promulgated. God had just revealed Himself to Moses by a name Jehovah which meant a great deal, which had a special significance for the chosen people. It recalled the promises made to Abraham hundreds of years before; it was an earnest of the fulfilment of those promises hundreds of years after; it bound together the past, the present, the future; it assured them of the greatness of their past history, their present calling, and their future destiny—that all that was bound together in God. The name Jehovah is to them the revelation of what has been, is, and will be. They stand there as a nation with a history, with a present task, with a great and magnificent future; face to face with Him who is—'I am that I am'—the eternal self-existence, with whom time is not; who is the God of Abraham, who died centuries before, as He is the God of those standing before the Mount, as He is the God of Apostles and martyrs who as yet are unborn. All the sense of relationship to the past and to the future; all the conviction that their present is the outcome of their past and the seed of their future—so essential for the development of a nation's life—is bound up and asserted and fixed in the new name that is revealed to Moses in the name Jehovah.

So this commandment about not taking the name of God in vain came just when their minds were full of this new name, Jehovah, and gave it that special sacredness to which their own instinct was prompting them.

And we see in their after-history how deeply this commandment went home. So great was the awe with which the name Jehovah became invested that it came to be regarded as a secret not to be mentioned to the heathen nations with whom they came in contact. In reading the Scriptures they never pronounced it, but substituted Elohim for it; there is even a tradition that it was heard but once a year when it was uttered by the High Priest on the great day of Atonement.

I. It is our privilege to know God by a name which brings Him far nearer to us than Jehovah; we know Him by a name which connotes the closest love, the most protective interest, by the name of Our Father. The name of Father is no mere fashion of speech; it describes to us the inmost nature and character of God. Christ

has made it possible for us to know the Father, and so to know God. 'The Father Himself loveth you' is His revelation of the inmost significance of its meaning. Yet though every feeling of reverence and gratitude bids us use that wondrous name with awe and recollection, we can offer no mere ceremonial homage to His name. It is Himself we reverence, it is Himself in His nature, His will, His character, for being what He is and what He has told us that He is.

And so our reverence for Himself spreads over all that is connected with Him—over man made in His image whatever may be his outward conditions; over all that is affected by His name, all that is associated with His worship, the Bible, the Ministry, the Sacraments. Our reverence is shown, not by unwillingness to mention His name, but by that inward prostration of heart and soul and spirit before Him which affects and colours all our outward actions. All external reverence is the result of this inward awe. This is very much misunderstood and it may be well to say a few words about it. We are often exhorted to reverence in these days as if it were an outward thing; there are certain outward acts said to be reverent and we are told that to omit them is to be wanting in reverence. To make it quite clear, such outward acts as bowing to the Altar and making the sign of the Cross are said to be reverent. Certainly they may be, if they mean anything. If making the sign of the Cross means that you are filled with a sense of the great love of our Master and only Saviour in dying for you, that you desire to keep it alive in that fashion, it may be a token of real reverence. But it may be, it often looks as if it were the merest form, the most shallow and meaningless ceremony.

Certainly the body has its share in reverence; the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the Lamb. Certainly no one full of reverence could possibly sit on a chair and stare in front of him, while imploring God to have mercy on him. Kneeling in prayer, standing in praise, bowing the head at the name of Jesus are outward tokens of reverence, but they are not reverence itself. Reverence is an inward thing; it comes from the sight of God, from the spiritual vision. 'Woe is me,' cries Isaiah, 'for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'

II. The Third Commandment is, when we consider it deeply, not only the safeguard of reverence; it is also the protection of truth and honesty. Falsehood arises really from indifference to the real nature of God. If God is a fetich, then you may lie. If He is a living Person, you cannot. To lie is to take God's name in vain. We have almost forgotten that the Third Commandment gives the strongest support to truthfulness, that its meaning for us Christians

is that in every word we speak, we speak in the name of God, as His representative, and in His Presence.

III. There is one other effect of entering into the spirit of this commandment which must be dwelt on, because there are signs in our conversation and our literature of its necessity. We take God's name in vain assuredly when we scoff at anything which either is good or tries to be; when we sit and criticise those who are labouring to make the world better, when we laugh at their failures and misrepresent their motives.

Let it be said once and for all that people who try to live Christian lives are sure to present some inconsistencies. They must be inconsistent—all of them for a while—some of them always. They must be inconsistent because their standard is a very high one and it is hard to attain to it in this world. only those who try to attain to it know how hard it is. The Christian position is so often misunderstood that it is always worth while restating it. The Christian does not profess to be better than other people; he acknowledges that he often breaks God's commandments, that he is a sinful man, that he needs redemption; he knows far better than his critic that he often fails, he weeps bitter tears about these very inconsistencies over which they are chuckling, he is conscious of his sinfulness and of his inability to cure it without help from above, he is clinging to Christ as his Saviour from those very inconsistencies at which the scoffer is jeering. Seen in this light is not then the whole attitude of scoffing brutal and inhuman? It is like laughing at a wounded soldier on the battle-field; it is like jeering at a fever-stricken patient in a sick-room. If you are doing nothing yourself to hallow God's name, to make His nature, His character and will known and loved by men, at least beware how you scoff at those who, with whatever inconsistencies and whatever infirmities, are trying to maintain His cause. CANON EYTON.

## The Seed and the Soil.

*Hear ye then the parable of the sower.* S. MATTHEW xiii. 18.

THE Holy Land has been called a Fifth Gospel. Certainly its vivid memories have often enabled me to realise and understand the human surroundings of the life of Jesus during those sinless years beneath the Syrian blue. Standing on, perhaps, the very spot of the shore, opposite the place where the fisher-boat of S. Peter lay flinging its shadow over the gleaming sapphire lake of Galilee, and where the multitudes stood on the bank beneath the pink and scented

oleanders, I saw what Dean Stanley has so well described. There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge, there was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge on either side to keep the seed from falling here or there beside it or upon it—itself hard with a constant tramp of horse, and mule, and human feet. There was the good rich soil which distinguishes the whole of that plain from the bare hills which descend elsewhere into the lake; there was the rocky ground upon the hillside, protruding here and there through the corn-fields; there were large bushes of thorns—that kind of which tradition says the crown of thorns was woven—springing up like the fruit-trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat; and there, perhaps, was the patient sower at his actual work. Such was the every-day scene outspread before the eyes of the listeners, which, like all other every-day incidents, the Son of Man utilises for His teaching of the sons of men.

I. The parable is usually called briefly 'the Parable of the Sower,' and this fixes our mind on Christ, the Heavenly Sower. But the main point of the parable, and of its explanation by the divine lips which uttered it, is the difference of the soils on which the good seed fell, and it is to this point that I shall isolate your attention. As he sowed, some fell by the wayside. It could not grow there, because it was not buried there—'that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' It lies on the hard, unreceptive surface of the trodden path; it produces no effect whatever—it is utterly wasted, the fowls of the air devour it, and the beaten path remains unchanged, brown, and barren. It is the metaphor of hardened hearts. Has it no warning for us? The Sower is ever passing and repassing, year after year, season after season; the path runs through the very midst of the fertile field. It is not left destitute of the good seed, so rich in its potentialities of green blade, and milky ear, and golden harvest; but, for all this, it is never in any sense the better until it is ploughed up, so that the seed can burgeon; it remains to the last the trodden way and not the fruitful field. It is the symbol of Christian hearts trampled into insensible apathy by thousands of solemn teachings reiterated in vain. It is the picture of the peril caused by fatal familiarity with religious phrases without any real acceptance of their meaning. The very best of us is not exempt from that peril.

Is not the description, 'Some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air devoured it,' an exact description of countless congregations in which the soil of the heart, except in few, is like that trodden, hard wayside? The fowls of the air, the despicable little winged creatures of the prince of the power of the air, hungry to

snatch away all chance of fertility from the trampled soil—small gossip, little tittle-tattle, smart sneers, silly remarks, decrepit epigrams, the self-confidence of a criticism at once niggling and ignorant—all perch upon the lips of the unreal at the very church-door, ready to devour even the minute seedlet of the sacred grain.

II. Some of the seed fell on the thin ground and sprinkled over the native rock. The seed was permitted a sort of growth, the ground could be green with a short-lived superficiality, but the growth of that attenuated soil cannot hold out against the heat of persecution or the pains of temptation. It has no root. What can the religious life be without the root of prayer? It lacks moisture. What can the religious life be without the dew of the grace of God? Nothing but the lichen can grow upon that rock. It may look well enough, with its silvery lustre or orange stain, but it is leafless, flowerless, fruitless for evermore.

III. 'And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.' The thorns are the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares and pleasures of this life, and the besetting temptations which strangle growing corn so that it can bring forth no fruit to perfection. Each description, any one of the three, seems but too like our own hearts in different parts and aspects of them. There is, I believe, many and many a man who would be a Christian, instead of half a Christian, or almost a Christian, if he would shut up his counting-house and fling away his ledger and decide that he has made quite enough already and needs nothing more of what this world can give him. But we leave ourselves no time to think, or rather we make time to think of what we deem to be needful, all except the 'one thing needful.' We crowd the page of our lives with all kinds of writing—figures, plans, thoughts, ambitions—we scribble it over with egotisms and frivolities, and leave no margin at all to write what should be its true summary; the best is crowded out; there is no room left for God in hearts so full of idols. There may be a beginning of the growth of the good seed, a sort of green blade, in boyhood, in youth, in early manhood, good designs, good desires, good intentions—hell is paved with them!—even some good works; but they are so choked with other designs, other desires, other works, other intentions—so entangled amid the viperous roots of lust, and the nullities of pleasure, and the thousand nothings, nothing worth, which make up man's life, that they cannot grow. Is it not the fulfilment of Ezekiel's terrible description, 'They sit before Thee as Thy people, and they have Thy words, but their heart goeth after their covetousness'?

IV. There remains but the good ground. I will say but a very few words about it. The effect of all preaching, the effect of all

good seed, whenever and wherever sown, depends on the condition of the heart and will which receive or refuse it. Unless we break up the fallow ground, or if we sow among our thorns, harvest there shall be none. Nettle-seed, it is true, needs no digging, the thistle-downs of evil thoughts and evil passions cling on anywhere, but the good seed demands the labour of the husbandman. The productiveness of the heart is conditioned by its receptivity. How awfully does Christ condense this lesson when identifying the lost seed with the worthless soul! He says, not 'it'—'*he* that was sown by the way-side, and *he* that was sown among thorns.' The fate of God's seeds in the man becomes the fate of the man himself; the history of his life becomes the history of the seed sown in him. While he is judging the Sower, God is judging him. Does not the lesson of Christ receive then a new and awful significance, 'Take heed how ye hear'?

DEAN FARRAR.

## The Choking of the Word.

*And these are they which are sown among thorns, such as hear the Word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.* S. MARK iv. 18-19.

FOUR sowings result in three failures. That is Christ's estimate of what was likely to be the issue of His work. He does not tells us the relative areas of the different lots of the field, and so we cannot enter upon any arithmetical calculations, but He does tell us that at every stage of growth there is a danger.

The first phase of the parable illustrates the danger that first emerges. The seed cast upon the trodden path never gets into the ground at all. The second, that sown on the rocky soil, does get rooted, and it is beginning to grow. And this third has got considerably further on the way to growth, has successfully come through the earlier dangers, but just as it is coming to perfection it, too, succumbs and fades.

I. What are the thorns? Jesus Christ puts three things which, in another of the versions of the parable, are even more distinctly exhibited as being three different forms of one thing: 'the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things,' says S. Mark. S. Luke, on the other hand, puts it 'the cares and the riches and the pleasures,' and then a phrase which includes all the other three, 'of this life.' So these three, unlike as they look, down at bottom are one thing, in a very important respect. All three—gnawing anxiety, full-fed confidence, and hungry longing after possible and material good—are the three heads of the one hound,

barking and yelping in different keys, but all expressive of the same tendency and disposition. I might use the metaphor of the thorn otherwise than Christ meant it. African travellers tells us that when they are on their journeys, the thing that they dread most is that thorny plant which they call the 'wait-a-bit-thorn,' that lays hold of a man as he passes and keeps him from advancing, and makes the march slow. These are the thorns that check and retard us in our Christian progress.

II. Note the growth of these ugly things. The evil thing grows spontaneously, whilst the good is exotic, and wants cultivation. There is a struggle for existence, and if we sit with our hands in our pockets and let the things grow as they will, the worse growth will master the better.

III. Note the slow, impenetrable, stealthy, certain choking of the word. A swift-growing, thick-stemmed plant rises by the side of the tender green spikelets, shuts them in on each hand, takes all the goodness out of the soil, excludes from them the blessed sunshine and the quickening air, so that the divine growth becomes pale and withered, and the spikelets droop, and there is no healthy green tending to ripeness in it. And after a bit it is dead and gone, choked by the slow process. The thing meant is this, a gradual drawing away of interest and love from God's gospel and from religion. If the house is full, Jesus Christ has to go to the stable. If the great bulk of our love and all our effort, and all our interest runs in the one direction, there will be none left to run in the other. And if we let the weeds grow there is nothing left for the good seed to grow in or to grow by. The silent ebbing out of the life from the religion of multitudes of professing Christians is pointed at very solemnly in these words.

A. M'LAREN.

## The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

*It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*
S. MATTHEW xiii. 11.

I. GOD is always undoing mystery. He keeps no mystery for the sake of the mystery. He is never withholding, but always giving. His work in relation to us has been from the first an unfolding. He is the God that giveth truth. He does not withdraw Himself or hide Himself, but is constantly coming forward, pressing upon the knowledge of His creatures and seeking to make them understand. I say again, He does not put forth His will to hide, but ever and always to reveal. Where we do not understand it is not because He does not want us to know, but because we need more of

Him in us before we can know, and in order that we may have more of Him in us we must do something, not He alone. But the fact is, if we look at it aright, that the cause of our not understanding what God calls His mysteries is that we ourselves are not simple enough, we ourselves are not children enough. For the whole idea of God is an absolute simplicity to which those that know Him at all are slowly advancing. The end of all in humanity that is sometimes said to resemble creation, and which is foolishly often called by that name, the work of man in the arts of life—in painting, in poetry, in sculpture, in music, in building,—the true aim in them all is simplicity. The aim in morals is simplicity. The end at least is simplicity, and the nearer that the heart comes to be able to look upon the mysteries of God the more the heart wonders to see what common sense, what absolute simplicity of reasonableness the thing is. The mysteries of God are the things that the wise and prudent so often turn aside from; they take them as matters of course; and many besides the wise and prudent, many fools likewise, many who are wise in their own eyes—let me say all who are wise in their own conceits.

And in this spirit let us look at the parable that our Lord had just spoken about as containing mystery. Well, God knows it is to me the deepest of all mysteries, even in the common sense of mystery, a thing that utterly perplexes me, and I just stop there and cannot understand it, and that is the point when the heart of man, the child of God, stops turning its back upon Him, and begins to wheel round the other way; the point when the prodigal, who is the type of every one who goes away from God, and loves anything better than God—the point when the prodigal just stops and begins—the centre moment when he turns—how and what is it? God, it seems to me, alone can see and know that, but that this turning takes place we know, and plenty of testimony could you have to the fact. The soul may be standing with its back to God, looking out into infinite dismay, and the next moment that soul may be weakly lifting up half-blind eyes, searching, searching for the Father.

II. And so in this parable about the seed sown. And looking at all the parables of Christ, what I find in them is this, that He is doing what He can just so to wake up the soul of man, and to cause this change to be begun in the soul of man. He does not speak the parables for the purpose of concealment. Neither does He speak them for the purpose of instructing the intellect and the understanding about things. That is not His work, though all that follows is. I do not believe there is—I am almost ashamed to say it because it seems to me such a truism—that there is any education, any strengthening of the intellect, any clarifying of the imagination to be caused by any other force, gained from any other source, than just bowing in

obedience, in a daily endeavour to do the thing He would have us do.

The Lord speaks in all His parables to wake up that power of life in us that makes a man put everything aside and look up and feel that he has but to be, and he must be, he must be the thing that the Eternal Father made His child to be, else we are but the defective insect we may be born. G. MACDONALD.

## What Lack I Yet?

*And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother; and Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me.* S. MATTHEW XIX. 16-21.

THE actual question put by this young ruler of the synagogue is one which would be frequently put to a Rabbi at that day by his disciples. The answer given might vary, but it would always suggest some stricter observance of the law. 'There is nothing else,' says the Talmud, 'that is good, but the law.' Instead of that Christ leads the young ruler through certain of the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments up to their one positive precept, 'Honour thy father and mother,' and then to that positive and all-embracing command, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—leads him on only to find them admitted by him as really binding, as actually kept from his youth up. His was evidently the sincere answer of an honest heart, and there is no reason to doubt either the genuineness of the effort that he had made, or his immunity from actual outward offences against any of the commandments mentioned, or even to impute to him lack of modesty. We might well expect to find him self-satisfied with so much genuine moral achievement. But in youth there are deeper cravings, which this young man had found within him and which he could not stifle. There are higher cravings, earnest and generous, which have not yet disappeared before the paralysing influence of the world's sneers, or before indulged vicious propensities. The soul in youth longs for the true, the better, the ideal; and this great Teacher, this Rabbi as he esteemed Christ, had awakened within him at once these cravings and a vision of some possible fulfilment. He had had visions and dreamed dreams, and somehow this Prophet had seemed to give them point and a possible fulfilment. His moral

earnestness had brought him to the feet of One, in whom he dimly felt there was no ordinary conventional goodness. Christ was to him no last refuge from the soul-agony of conscious guilt. He was the embodiment of his visions and the ideal of his dreams. And so, out of the vague feeling of his own personal unsatisfactoriness, in spite of his moral achievement, he blurts out the question, 'What lack I yet?' And Christ saw it all and felt it all; all the pathos of his intensity, all the ineffable sweetness of that upward look of longing, all the tragedy of disappointment that was before him; saw, too, what he did lack—the one thing needful—saw the inward necessity, and laid His finger on the one fulfilment of that necessity. 'One thing is needful for such as thou, one thing only: companionship with Me—an absolute coming to and an entire following of Me; and since that companionship and that following are not possible in your present mode of life, cut yourself off from it. Since the following of One who has not where to lay His head is obviously and plainly incompatible with great possessions, with a splendid house and grand entertainments, therefore go "sell that thou hast, and come and follow Me."'

I. What I want to press upon you is that which is so often overlooked and ignored in what is written and said about this incident. The discussion so often turns on the means by which the young ruler was to be enabled to follow Christ, which is the accident; and not on the following itself, which is the essence. 'Come and follow Me'—that was the answer to the question, 'What lack I yet?' To follow Christ, to be His companion, to be His disciple, to learn of Him was what this man needed. All this could not be done unless he surrendered the cares and the claims of a great earthly position. The surrender of possessions was not a general condition for all who would follow Christ; but in this case it was the test as to whether he desired it enough to make him put away what obviously must interfere with it. It is clear that, immediately, he had not enough desire for it. He went back to his riches, for the time at any rate; he made what Dante calls the great refusal. Dante sees him in the number of those who are blown about like autumn leaves on the confines of the outer world, blindly following a painted flag, which heaven rejects and even hell despises, hateful to God and to His enemies. Among such he sees 'the shade of him who made through cowardice the great refusal.' But it seems impossible to believe that this was the issue. One cannot but follow one so obviously genuine, one so full of aspirations, in imagination, and see him come to himself and feel abashed and cut to the quick by the recollection of what might have been and what was. One sees him go back to his luxurious apartment and find that all the sweetness had gone out of life and of these conditions, which once seemed so happy; one sees him struggling to adapt himself to old

ways with ever-increasing reluctance, till his possessions grow intolerable to him and he finds himself driven as it were by shame and regret and self-contempt to that life of service and companionship with Christ, which at the first had seemed not worth the price. The need, that had once awoke within him, was surely too real not to re-assert itself. That, we must not only hope, but believe, was the issue. He was the son who said at first, 'I go not,' but being what he was, being one whom Jesus, beholding, loved, surely 'he afterwards repented and went.'

II. We miss the real lesson if we think of the condition as universal. There is in every one the same inward necessity, the same lacking, that there was in him. Whether we are moral or immoral, whether we keep the commandments or ignore them, there is in a greater or less degree this lack within us. In some it seeks a refuge from the consciousness of sin; in others it desires the fulfilment of their dreams and aspirations. There is this one lack; and its satisfaction is in fellowship with Christ, association with Him. Christ became Man to show us at once the beauty of the perfect life and the means of its attainment. To be one with Him, to share in mystical communion His life—not only to admire, to long for Him, but to know Him and the power of His Resurrection within us, to rise to His ideals and to be His very own—that is the only satisfaction of this inward necessity. To obey the moral law, even to keep the commandments, does not satisfy; the lacking goes on. But become at one with Him, live His life as he did who cried in one exhaustive sentence 'to me to live is Christ,' and the inward necessity is realised. Whatever is involved in this, even the selling all that we have, becomes possible directly the inward necessity is realised. 'Those things which were gain to me I counted them as dung, that I might win Christ and be found in Him,' cries S. Paul, not for the satisfaction of a mere selfish egotism, or a mere desire to find peace, or to secure himself from possible loss, but from the deepest conviction that there and there alone with Christ and in Christ could be found his true life, the life he was meant to live, the full life which alone could bless others. No bare morality, no keeping of an external law could sustain this life; nothing could but perfect association with Christ, nothing could but oneness with Him.

III. We do not believe in education, civilisation, or refinement raising men permanently apart from Christ. At the end of all modern versions of the Ten Commandments which may be promulgated by philosophy, morality, or science, we believe that the question would remain, 'What lack I yet?' The severe requirements of the New Testament come in here, not to mock, not to insult, not to discourage, but to regulate; to give us the true measure of things here, to give

us the compensation for their failure and the hope of completion for their imperfection. Otherwise the vision of a completely civilised educated world that has (as far as devotion goes) parted with Christ, or only left Him a niche in its pantheon, along with Socrates and Shakespeare and Marcus Aurelius, is a dream—a dream from which the awakening will be only too bitter. R. EYTON.

## Lessons from the Flood.

*And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark.*
GENESIS vii. 1.

LET us notice five of the most salient facts that touch most deeply the heart of this subject.

I. The first fact which I wish to impress upon you from this story of the Flood is this, that Almighty God, on account of the hideous wickedness to which the world had grown, had made up His mind, as the shortest and best way of dealing with it, to sweep it away once and for all. The great age to which men lived in those times must have tended to increase wickedness in two ways; it must necessarily have increased the growth of luxury and made a bad man, if he lived to the age of 900 years, do a vaster amount of evil by his badness than a man could do who only lived to threescore years and ten. In the book of Genesis there is nothing said about Noah's preaching; but S. Peter says a great deal about it, and we infer from him that Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years. Partly by building the ark and partly by going up and down the world telling men the flood was coming on, he did what he could to get the race saved from divine vengeance and to make the ark useful for those whom he personally loved. He told men there was a flood coming, and all he got for telling them was that they laughed at him. They said that they did not see the flood nor the God that was to send the flood; that they did as they pleased, and no one interfered with them. They lived year by year and age by age, and their strength did not decay, and they were satisfied. They said, 'Where is God? We do not see Him. Where is His anger? We do not see it. Where is His providence? We do not discover it. No, you are gone mad. Hold your peace.'

II. Secondly, Noah was not only to be a preacher of righteousness, and God was not only to fulfil His purpose of vengeance, but in His wrath remembering mercy, determined that, out of the seed of Noah, He would people the earth once more with a race that would not be so monstrously wicked as the one He destroyed. Then, to deliver

man, was to be born the Son of God, who, by His precious blood, was to redeem the world to a new life, and bring it into a new fellowship with Him. God told Noah to build his ark, and it was to be a refuge for the creatures and for himself and family, and then we read that God told Noah to go himself into the ark. 'Enter thou into the ark.' Noah was to set the example to go there; he was to be preserved; his precious life was to be preserved for years after. But he was not only himself to go into the ark; all his house were to go with him. We are justified in saying that all his children were with him, and that some were born to him after he went into the ark, although we do not read that he had any in there. Noah was to take his wife and his sons, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, and there they were to be a holy and blessed and mutual and comforting society, while the great rain was falling, and the deed of death was being done.

III. God told Noah and his house to go into the ark; and why? 'The Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.' Noah had borne testimony for God. He had accepted the Word of God, and began to build the ark among the scoffs and curses of those around him. He had been an example to his children, an example to his neighbours, and because of that righteousness of his God gave him his own life, the life of his wife, and of his family.

Now, there is another flood coming—not a flood of water. God has promised never to destroy the earth with a flood of water again; and, whenever you see a glorious rainbow spanning the drenched earth, remember that God keeps His word. He has once drowned the world with a flood, and He will never drown it again. But S. Peter tells us that God is going to bring a day of destruction upon the earth, in which the world will be burned up with fire; and science has nothing to tell us of that day, though it can calculate the rapidity of planets, and the rise and fall of comets, and can account for their appearance.

But science tells us that down under the cool crust of this earth there is a boiling liquid, a fluid of burning liquid fire, which, at any time, when what we call the laws of nature compel it, may burst through the crust of the earth and destroy it in a moment. Revelation and science are here at one. The day is coming. We may deny it, we may forget it, we may despise it and put it away, but the day is coming. We may not live to see it; we may be in our quiet graves before it comes, or we may live to see it; and while we are marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking, waking and sleeping, buying and selling, the day may come, and Christ will judge us. Whether that be the case or not, it is coming; and though we may

say, 'Where is God? where is the promise of His word?' the day is coming, and this earth will be burned up with its gardens of beauty and all its places of vice; and all its men and women of crime will pass away out of the sight of God. That is what the Bible says; and if you and I believe the Bible you and I must believe that.

Christian parents, the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, 'Come into the ark.' He wants your soul to be saved; He wants you to ask yourselves if you are saved, and why? First, because He loves you. He loves you, and one of the proofs of His love are the children that sit upon your knee. Because He loves you and wants to save you, He tells you to go into the ark, and to lose no time about it, because the seven days may soon be over when the flood will begin.

And then, when you are saying 'What will come out of all this?' you will find the infinite preciousness of the soul which the Lord has snatched as a brand from the burning; you will find the awful sinfulness of the sin which you never looked at or really understood until Jesus cast it behind you into the depths of the sea; you will be filled with a wonderful, grateful zeal to God, who has saved you with His salvation, and you will have the great fear and jealousy lest you should miss those that you love at the last, that you should be saved and they be lost; lest there should be the bitterest of all conceivable partings, and the parent stands at the right hand, and the children at the left.

IV. But remember it was said to Noah, 'Come thou and all thy house into the ark,' and I want for a moment to dwell upon the words 'Thy house.' Those of you who are familiar with Christian language will possibly recollect that the expression 'Thy house' in this sense occurs no less than thirty times in the Word of God. It just shows the value that God sets upon family life. You remember how it was said of Noah building the ark to the saving of his house, and how it was said of Eli, 'God will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not'; and how God plagued Pharaoh and his house, and how the Word of God was preached to Cornelius and his house, and how it was said to the gaoler at Philippi, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.'

V. And remember there is one lesson more. God gave it as a reward to Noah for his righteousness that his children went with him into the ark. Speaking of Christian parents, in what way are we justified in looking for direct reward for our exertions? I think we must not take it actually and always as a matter of course that God, at any rate in our lifetime, will always give us our children's souls. And certainly we must not take it as a matter of course that however much our family may be reared and trained for God, we shall be kept

in perfect immunity from all the sorrows, and all the partings, and all the temptations, and all the calamities of life. No; but it is where all the members of a family are not joined together in an indissoluble tie in the providence of God that there is a great blessing in the head of the family being a Christian. First of all, the blessed Spirit of God overshadows with His continual presence the house where the father and the mother are temples of Jesus. Then, in the house where the sacrifice of prayer and praise continually goes up to God on high, we may believe, I think, without any presumption or unreasonableness, that the angels of God make their continual encampment, and that where there is the voice of prayer there is the inheritance of blessing. BISHOP THOROLD.

## VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

S. Matt. xiii. 8.

About two years ago, a lady, while strolling along the banks of the Tweed, near her own mansion, either mislaid or accidentally dropped a new copy of Reid's *Blood of Jesus*, bearing her name and address. There, among the grass, the flowers, and the drifting leaves of autumn, it lay, until a rainy season flooded the river. The uprising waters, surging over the grassy banks, swept it out into the current, and carried it downwards for many miles. At last it floated aside towards a mill-dam, where, along with much wreckage brought down by the flood, it became fast in the mill heck. Here it was discovered by a working man, who came from some distance to the saw-mill to procure a load of wood. He took it home and read it; and at once he became deeply earnest about his soul's salvation. After a while he gave himself to Christ, and has since endeavoured to live as a Christian should do. Several other persons have also been blessed by reading this precious little volume. In this marvellous manner the Lord was pleased to carry the glad tidings to several careless persons, making the waters an instrument in bearing the saving message.

*Longing for the Forbidden.*

Genesis iii. 2, 3.

Speaking of the craving of colonists for dispossessing the Indians of their lands, a modern writer says: 'On their way to the Kansas border, they passed over thousands of desirable acres, convenient to markets and schools, which they might have had at low rates and on long credits. But they had a special craving for Indian lands, and lands 'kept out of market:' the simple denial to enter this territory is sufficient to make them think it the fairest portion of the universe.'

# ILLUSTRATIONS

*Opening of Eyes.*

IT is the misery of man, that he arrives at understanding through the loss of innocence.

GENESIS iii. 5.

*Quenching the Spirit.*

A PREACHER says, 'It is long since I was a collegian, either as a senior here, or previously as a member of the lower classes elsewhere. I still remember vividly three young men who went about *swearing by the Holy Ghost*, which they considered the unpardonable sin. They were already hardened and reckless. One of them, who became a brilliant physician, died in middle age, a suicide; another of them, still earlier, a drunkard; the other yet lives, a physician, but with not a sign of religious thought or feeling. This reminiscence has led me to the subject of quenching not the Spirit, as one adapted to young men just laying the foundations of life.

GENESIS vi. 3.

'In the class of 1840, of which I was a member, were two ministers' sons, of fine minds, but neither of them Christians. During revival services near by this edifice, at about this season of the year, one of them was converted; but the other held aloof. Under an urgent appeal from his friend he had, however, been touched. He did not quench the Spirit. He became, finally, a minister, and settled at New Rochelle. In the same class was a third member, an avowed infidel. After graduation he banded with others even worse than himself to go by sea to New Orleans, and thence overland into Texas, there to form a predatory band for the commission of all kinds of iniquity. They did not all reach New Orleans. A part went on, but were attacked by disease. This student buried the last one, and was left alone. From Galveston he worked his way home, sick, diseased, and ragged, to his mother's door. He got a little school at New Rochelle, but was a gambler and misanthrope, resisting long all his classmate's advances and appeals. Touched at length by them, he did not quench the Spirit. He began a higher, a Christian life; and these three students of this college, within these walls nearly fifty years ago, are now all ministers of Christ, living in the West.

GENESIS vi. 5.

EMMANUEL refuses even to allow a letter from Diabolus to enter the town of Mansoul. A preacher has well said: 'There must be no correspondence whatever. The devil's letters are evil hints and suggestions, and if you entertain them, then you are opening up a correspondence with him. Whenever you get a letter addressed in his handwriting, with the post-mark of hell on it, destroy it at once.' Luther said, 'I cannot help unclean birds flying over my head, but I can keep them from building and breeding in my hair.' So we cannot help evil thoughts crossing our minds, but we can keep them from dwelling there.

# SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

*A Quaint Epitaph.*

THE following quaint epitaph has reference to a little girl buried at the age of five months: 'But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark.'

GENESIS viii. 9.

*Noah's Prayer.*

TRADITION has preserved the prayer of Noah, and the learned John Gregory gives it to us as he gathered it from the Arabic and Syriac. And assuredly the prayer is a beautiful one, a prayer which might not only have been well offered up in that floating church, but which may be even a pattern for many prayers. The following is John Gregory's translation from the floating words of the traditional original: 'O Lord, excellent art Thou in Thy truth, and there is nothing great in comparison of Thee. Look upon us with the eye of mercy and compassion; deliver us from this deluge of waters and set our feet in a large room. By the sorrows of Adam Thy first-made man, by the blood of Abel Thy holy one, by the righteousness of Seth, in whom Thou art well pleased, number us not among those who have transgressed Thy statutes, but take us unto Thy merciful care, for Thou art our deliverer, and Thine is the praise from all the works of Thy hands for evermore. And the sons of Noah said: Amen, Lord.'

GENESIS viii. 20.

# The Sunday called Quinquagesima.

## Scriptures Proper to the Day.

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|---|---|
| EPISTLE . . . . . | 1 COR. XIII. 1-13. |
| GOSPEL . . . . . | S. LUKE XVIII. 31-43. |
| FIRST MORNING LESSON . | GENESIS IX. 1-20. |
| FIRST EVENING LESSON . | GENESIS XII. OR GENESIS XIII. |
| SECOND LESSONS. . . | ORDINARY. |

## I. COMPLETE SERMON.

### The Supremacy of Love.

*And have not charity.* I CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

THERE is no wiser arrangement of our Church than that order of our Prayer Book which makes 'love' porch Lent. And there, this inimitable chapter stands to-day, on the threshold of our Lenten exercises, for three reasons: First, to remind us that all our acts of self-discipline are 'nothing worth' if they have not the moving power of 'love,' —for affection is above everything; secondly, to prepare, and melt the soul, for penitence, by that greatest of all softeners—a tender, loving heart; and thirdly, to set before us, for our study, a perfect picture of Him, whose sufferings and death we are going to contemplate: for, read the chapter through, and wherever you find the word 'charity' put the word 'Jesus,' and you have at once a true portraiture of Christ, and the key which unlocks the deeper meaning of the apostle's words.

The intention of the whole chapter is evidently to take us out of all that is external, and to raise us to a higher and more spiritual and heavenly habit.

The words of my text—that negative of 'charity'—occur in each of the three first verses of the chapter; and in each they express a

contrast, or a want, which nothing can supply. 'Have not love!' 'Have not love!' Then what are the rest without that? Mere sound; nothingness; no profit; or, as the collect of to-day said, 'dead.'

I. It may be a question whether 'eloquence' has done most good or harm in the world. And it is a testimony to God's truth that the finest, and most celebrated and most versed in language, in every age, are those who, if they did not possess, certainly affected to possess, the feeling. For every one is moved by his affections more than by his intellect. And therefore eloquence—which may be defined 'the art of persuasion'—eloquence must have more to do with the heart than with the head.

But, more religiously, I am quite sure that the sermons which do the most good are those which, drawn from the heart, are pointed to the heart again. Such were our Lord's. And of that great reasoner, S. Paul, the most impassioned parts are those which we all most admire and most feel.

What we have to do with our preaching is to bring the love of God to awaken your love. If love be left out, it may be an essay, but it is not a sermon. We have to meet the secrets and the necessities and the inner life of the human heart. It is a contemptible thing if people go away, and say, 'It was a fine sermon!' Was it a loving one? Did it show a God of love? Did it go to the heart? Did it kindle any love for Christ and holiness in any breast? If not, what was it? 'Words!' 'a pleasant song!' 'a piece of music!' like listening to a band! 'Sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.'

And so with your words. You will always find that the more love you put into anything you say, the more you will attain the object, and do good.

When you are speaking to God, do not think much of your words: only be sure that your heart is right, and you will speak well: you will speak to good effect.

And to men, speak lovingly, especially to the bad. See the good in everybody. Speak of the good in everybody. Make the good in everybody prominent. Let it be quite evident that you feel affectionately, and that you have a kind intention. Let the look and the manner and the language and the tone and the accent all speak love!

Then you are quite sure not to speak in vain. It is a rule which never fails. All else goes little further than the ear, or it irritates; but words of love will draw out the dormant feeling that is in every man; and the great secret is to awaken the dormant good. But 'though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.'

II. Our lot is cast on those days of Daniel's prophecy, when

'knowledge shall be increased.' And we glorify God for it—for 'knowledge' is an excellent thing. But has the education of the heart kept pace with the education of the head? Is it an age of love? Are families more united? Is the Church more one? Or, has knowledge made the young conceited, and the aged dictatorial? Has it made many sceptics? Has knowledge been the handmaid of faith, or its rival?

And if knowledge has been unfavourable to the higher truth, why is it? For knowledge is a divine and holy thing. God is 'the God of knowledge.' I believe that the evil—if it be—owes itself to disproportion. If any one part of man's being be cultivated disproportionately to another, the result must be bad.

Knowledge should be wedded to love; but if they be divorced, neither can hold a good separate existence. Love, without knowledge, is a weak, sensational, capricious, dangerous sentiment. Knowledge without love is hard, cold, elated, presumptuous.

S. Paul never says that knowledge is an evil thing; but that knowledge without love is a nonentity—'I am nothing.' It will not do good, as God calls good. It will not make anybody happy. It will not assimilate any one to Him. It will not stand in any stead in the day of judgment. It will not avail anything. It will not be presentable to God at the last. Who will dare to stand up before God, and say, 'I am clever?' 'I am nothing!' 'I am nothing.'

Here is the danger. Our schools teach knowledge more than they teach love. We think much of our progress in knowledge; but who makes an examination of a boy's progress in love? Yet all the real happiness which is attainable in life is attainable by love.

Mere knowledge never converted anybody: mere knowledge never attracted anybody: mere knowledge never comforted anybody.

Nor will your knowledge ever give you peace. The likeness of God is love. The evil spirits in our Lord's lifetime knew more than the disciples. The damsel with 'the spirit of divination' knew more than the magistrates.

III. Never think—when two things are compared in the Bible, and one is said to be better than the other, that therefore that other is small. To give to the poor is a very good thing; martyrdom is good. Nor are they not good, because charity is better. But if you give 'all your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth nothing.'

Every one will do well this Lent to endeavour—by whatever means he finds the most efficacious—to bring his body into more subjugation, and to practise economy and self-denial, that he may have the more to give, for a body subordinate to the spirit, and a life of kind action is, to a great extent, 'true religion.'

And if ever you ask yourself, 'Could I be a martyr if the days of martyrdom were to come back again?' the answer lies in the degree in which you are exercising the daily little acts of self-victory, and carrying the cross, and enduring the trials, of which life is full.

I do not now speak of fasting. That is a matter which must be left to every one's own conscience. Only, let me say two things. Fasting is plainly right, for Christ said that 'His disciples would fast.' And He gave directions how they were to do it. And the disciples did it. But fasting is only a means to an end; and good only in so far as it forms a humble, penitent spirit.

But, setting aside fasting, there are other things you may do for self-subjugation.

You may get up earlier. You may forego little self-indulgences, that you may give more time to study and to devotion. You may conquer the dislike you have to somebody. You may begin some work of benevolence. You may set apart more of your income for charitable purposes. You may hold yourself more in hand. You may fight harder against your besetting sin. You may humble yourself more to somebody.

But, in all, you must look at your motive. God always looks at motive. The motive may be ostentation; the motive may have some idea of merit; the motive may be formalism; the motive may be fear; the motive may be the self-gratification which there always is in doing and giving. The motive may be a mere sense of duty. Charity of action is nothing unless it have charity of spirit within it. For there is a charity within a charity. And these words stand: 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' The love makes the man—for the love is God.

And how is this love attainable? 'What is charity?' Where is its genealogy? There is an affectionateness native in every man. It is an instinct of our nature. In some more, and in some less, but in every man; and capable of increase or of diminution. It is made to be consecrated; and consecrated natural instinct of affection is 'charity.'

How is it formed? 'God is love.' He has shown it in ten thousands of His works; and, above all, in the gift of His Son. As soon as we receive that Son, and feel our pardon, and our safety, and are united to Him, then we partake of God's character of love, by the Holy Ghost which comes into us; we love God for all that He is, and all that He has done. Loving, we wish to find a vent to express that love. We can only express it by loving acts to our fellow-creatures; and the acts of love reproduce the love which caused them, and the love grows.

And more and more the sense of God's forgiveness, and God's tenderness to us every day, makes it grow the faster, till love predominates; and God makes others love us, and we love them. We breathe an atmosphere of love.

And then everything takes the sweet flavour of love. And God reflects Himself more and more in us. And so we get His perfect image, which is heaven.

And there 'the tongues of men and of angels' will make true eloquence; and there it will be safe and delightful to 'understand all mysteries, and all knowledge;' and there, there will be no self, because love will have 'her perfect work;' and, in that world of universal affection, no one will have cause ever to say again, 'I have not charity.'

J. VAUGHAN.

## II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE.

### Charity.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

HERE is a divine attraction in to-day's epistle, which compels the attention of the preacher; and, as often as Quinquagesima Sunday comes round, forces him to adopt no other theme for his exhortation and instruction than that which is here so sublimely set before us by S. Paul. And no wonder that it should so move us; it has a right to do so. For here is something solid and sterling, the truth of which no argument can impugn or refine away, and the value of which no fresh discoveries, no time or change, can lessen. Here amid the encountering blasts of controversy, and the shifting quicksands of doubt and unbelief, under stress of which many a poor soul is in great danger of getting bewildered and lost, as he struggles on through the waste of this world to gain the far eternal city, he that will but listen to the divine persuasive voice may have his feet at once set upon a rock, and his 'goings ordered.' Let him reverence, let him yearn after, let him do his poor endeavour to practise charity, and by the grace of God, he shall gain possession of that which 'never faileth,' and which is greater than even Faith and Hope.

I. It is the aim of religion to lift men out of their natural unregenerate selves, and so far as their human nature is capable of such

exaltation, to make them more like God; to produce in them some feeble counterpart of that moral goodness which we worship in the perfection of the Divine Being. 'Be ye therefore perfect,' says our Lord, 'even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Now charity is the road which alone brings us on this heavenly journey, and each one of the several exhibitions of the same blessed spirit which are detailed for us by S. Paul in the chapter now before us is one more added to the golden steps that carry the Christian higher and higher towards the throne of God. The Patriarch, in his dream, 'beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven;' that was for angels to traverse, but this ladder of charity the weakest of mankind may climb on, if he will, till he rise far above his own self into a purer and diviner air.

Note some three or four of the chief aspects of our many-sided life, in which the exercise of charity is called for, and ask ourselves how far we exhibit, or fail to exhibit it, in them. This will at once convince us of the hardness of the task, and remind us wholesomely of our own shortcomings.

II. Take first our religion. If there be any subject in which our charity should be deep-seated and unquestionable, one would think it should be this. The solemn nature of the matter treated of, the deep importance of the issues, the sense of human feebleness and ignorance, in the face of the infinite and the unseen, the consciousness of our own personal failures and inconsistencies—these things, one would think, should make us very tender, both in judgment and act, towards other 'seekers after God.'

What hard thoughts, what harsh unsympathising judgments, the staunch Churchman often forms of his dissenting brother, and his dissenting brother forms of him! How suspicious and antagonistic is the attitude of Protestant to Catholic! And inside our own special Church, when party is in controversy with party, how often does a certain irritable and irrepressible antipathy take the place of brotherly love? 'Charity is not easily provoked: thinketh no evil: believeth all things; hopeth all things.' It seems like a mockery to urge that this is the spirit in which the Evangelical should handle the Ritualist: the stickler for dogma, judge of the sayings and doings of the Broad Churchman. And yet it is the true spirit, or the whole description of charity which S. Paul gives us is naught.

III. We will turn now to another wide field of action, politics. The more deeply men feel, the more impatient of opposition are they apt to be, and the more angry at anything that runs counter to their own persuasions. Next to religion, there is nothing of a public kind about which men feel more deeply than politics, and hence the frequent need in this sphere also of the blessed influences

of a Christian charity. Perhaps in the present day there is more than the common need for them. Certainly it has seemed to many elder men that during the last decade of years a sort of bitterness or rancour has often shown itself in political strife, which was as unwelcome as it was new to their experience. Difference of opinion has too often culminated in personal animosity, and it has seemed more hard than ever for political opponents to see any good in each other's views, or any nobleness in their aims.

If this be so, it becomes the special duty of the preacher to assert aloud the claims of charity to be reverenced and practised in the political arena. She would not stop the strife, but she would moderate it. She questions not the benefits of party government, nor doubts that by the free collision of opposition the truth is best elicited, and the course of action best marked out and decided on for a free people; but she does prescribe that the debate should be conducted on all hands with candour, with unvarying courtesy, with an earnest desire to secure the triumph, not of this or that particular faction or opinion, but of that which is right and good. It is as unchristian as it is foolish to impute bad or low motives to an opponent, where there is any hope that we may be mistaken, or to attribute to perverseness of will an attitude which is really caused by difference of mind and of circumstances. A Greek philosopher bids us so hate our enemies as though they might one day be our friends, and love our friends as though they might one day be our enemies. If the rule sound too cold and calculating for private life, there is a sense in which it is both wise and good when applied to political life.

IV. The relations which we have so far looked at have been all more or less of a public character: before concluding, let us give our thoughts to the demands of charity in the private region of domestic life. It is an old and a true saying that 'Charity begins at home.' Here, if anywhere, the Christian should exhibit that spirit of forbearance, of unselfishness, of unwearying, uncalculating kindness, of optimism in judging of the characters, motives, actions of those about him, which are the parts of charity. The occasions for its exercise are as numerous as the hours of the day, and as the persons with whom we are brought into social contact.

How unhappy are that man and woman who have linked their lot for life together, and yet have made no preparation to carry out the divine behests of charity in the insignificant things of daily life. They may bear a brave face to the world, but what profit is that to them, if the simple sweetness of the domestic hearth be marred by peevishness, or hardness, or a cutting tongue, or wilfulness, or mere want of sympathy? But let charity preside at the bridal, and the union of husband and wife contains the promise of a holy and noble,

and, so far as God sees fit, a fortunate life. It opens a wide field for the exercise of most Christian graces. Either is bettered by the other's influence, either helps on the other in goodness. The structure which is grounded on earth rises continually towards heaven, and the relation is transfigured by grace till it is become worthy to paint to our thoughts a still more exalted union.

E. H. BRADBY.

## The Need of Charity.

*Charity thinketh no evil.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.

I. THESE are days of restlessness and perpetual movement. There have been times of stagnation concerning all the highest things prevailing throughout civilised mankind generally. There have been times when, though there were wars and conflicts between nation and nation, yet, for all that, men generally acquiesced in many things that they thought evil, ascribing them all, as it were, to the mysterious ordinance of God's providence; not denying that they were evil, but looking upon them as governed by some hidden laws which man could not trace, and therefore to be accepted and submitted to, however evil they might be. And, of course, at such times there were here and there protests against everything that seemed to be wrong; and here and there were individuals who endeavoured to set it right; but the idea of questioning the fundamental rules upon which society was governed under God's providence did not largely influence men's minds. But all this has passed away, at least for the present; and ever since the tremendous crash of the great French Revolution, at the end of the last century, broke up men's belief in the permanence of ordinary institutions, there has been a spirit of questioning which seems to increase in strength as time goes on. That great movement spent itself, to all outer appearance, very rapidly; but the spirit from which it came, so far from having spent itself, is still moving the world, and on every side we see the traces of its power.

Is there, indeed, a God that made and that rules the world? Has He, indeed, made a revelation to mankind? Is there any reason for saying that the Book which Christians honour is such a revelation? Can you prove it to the conviction of human knowledge? Can you make us see that it is so? So questions are raised of the highest and of the deepest nature. There is nothing too high, there is nothing too deep to be questioned. Nothing! And out of this necessarily comes great heat on both sides—heat which seems to rise up inevitably.

The very importance of the whole matter makes it almost impossible to avoid heated tempers in all the discussions and in all the controversies. A man feels, when his deepest beliefs are questioned, somehow as if it were an insult to God Himself. That spirit which moved the two sons of Zebedee once to ask our God whether they should not pray for fire from heaven to consume the village that would not receive Him—that spirit which makes men feel that to question the truth is an insult to their Maker, an insult to their Redeemer—that spirit which has in it so much of Christian character that I suppose no Christian that lives is quite free from it, makes men sometimes hot in the defence of what they hold so closely to their heart, and makes men sometimes ready to maintain the Gospel by other than Gospel means—ready to treat all those who will not acknowledge the truth as they hold it as the enemies of God. We are tempted to assume that position which belongs to the Lord alone; we are tempted to be judges and to condemn into punishment.

II. At such a time as this there is real need of pressing upon the whole Church that duty of charity which extends so widely, which touches every action of our lives, which at every moment is of far more importance than any other duty that can be named. There are many duties, there are many gifts, there are many opportunities, there are many ways of serving the Lord. Seek, that the Lord may open to you all manner of excellent ways, but remember always the Apostle's words: 'Yet show I unto you a more excellent way'—the words in which he introduces what he says of this, the bond of peace and of all virtue.

If we look at the best and holiest of the spirits that are opposed to us, is it not a plain fact that many of them deserve our deepest respect, and that where we think them wrong—nay, I will go further—where we *know* them to be wrong, still, for all that, their character and the working of the grace of God visible in their lives, prove that, whatever mistakes they may make, the Lord somehow or other has shielded them from the worst consequences of all such mistakes; they are still His, still within the embracings of His love, still within the influences of His Holy Spirit, still looking forward to that day when all mistakes shall be set right by the Judge Himself; and the Lord who sees the heart and knows what it is that is the mainspring within every man's soul, shall say who have been true to Him and who have not—who have been true to Him throughout and who have failed, and of the best, shall pronounce that here there has been a failure, and yet not enough to take away from the servant the Lord's blessing, and here there has been something worse than mistake, and yet all that not enough to remove the man from the circle of the Lord's servants—not enough to stamp him with the condemnation that falls

on those who have disregarded the voice of the Holy Ghost within their souls, and have not only disbelieved what they could not somehow or other be brought to see, but have disbelieved that secret witness within the heart, about which no man can pronounce for his neighbour, about which the Lord, and the Lord alone, shall ever be able to make true judgment.

The lack of charity, whenever it comes in, has every mark of being opposed to the will of God. It is uniformly unsuccessful in its ultimate results. It produces a bitterness which ought never to come —which need not come—if our charity is strong enough. But, above all, it lowers the dignity of the Church itself; it lowers the majesty of that great creation which the Lord created to exhibit His Gospel to the world; it deprives that Church of that heavenly appearance which shines before men whenever the Church rises to her highest tasks, and which makes men feel that here, indeed, is something that speaks straight to our consciences, and our consciences answer, 'This is the representative of Christ to men.'

BISHOP TEMPLE.

## Love the one Thing Needful.

1 Corinthians xiii. 1-13.

OUR Epistle for the day belongs to those portions of holy Scripture which make us long to pour out our hearts in sincere and child-like prayers before our heavenly Father and our beloved Saviour, but neither to hear nor deliver a sermon on them. There are passages of God's word which are truly spoken as by the tongues of angels, and of which we can imagine that human hands could do nothing but mar them. There are flowers which refresh us by their colour and fragrance, but which wither as soon as they are touched, and which no human finger can restore, after it has once destroyed them. They bear the stamp of God's work upon them when they first catch our eye, but this is obliterated after every investigating touch.

At the same time, looked at from another point of view, such portions of the Bible especially require to be preached in human language, in order that the divine word may go forth from them. The natural eye of man easily finds a very fatal pleasure in them, for the reason that they not only shine with the light of truth, but also in the splendour of beauty. It rejoices, as it does over the whole creation of God, to turn its gaze upon the beauty of its bright

clothing, and not upon the truth which it presents—the body and the reality,—and therefore the loveliness of the divine language is for the natural man a hindrance to his embracing the deep meaning of the word of God. Woe to us, however, if we have first loved the beauty without the truth in the picture, and have found satisfaction and joy in the form apart from the reality!

'Love is the one thing needful.'

I. Let us not forget to what kind of people the Apostle is speaking in our text, and what gave him the occasion for this glorious chapter. S. Paul is writing to the Church of Corinth, and this appears in our New Testament, as may be easily understood by the condition of things at that time, as thoroughly distinct, through a peculiar tendency of their Christianity. The Corinthians aimed at high things, that is to say, they wished, with the sons of Zebedee, to sit one on the right hand and the other on the left hand of the Saviour in His kingdom. They did not merely strive after righteousness in Christ, but positively after glory in Him.

Does the Apostle at all blame them for this striving after glory in Christ? No! On the contrary, he commends them rather, and himself urges them to it again. 'Covet earnestly the best gifts.' But it was with them as with Zebedee's children, they knew not what they sought and asked for; they deceived themselves as to the nature of these heavenly gifts, and what was the chief thing on the way which led to them. For this reason S. Paul was forced to frustrate their own humanly-invented way, and promise them, 'Yet show I unto you a more excellent way.' And he fulfils this promise in our text. The short advice is, 'Follow after charity.'

'What kind of love is it of which the Apostle speaks?' Who can guess this in a world where there is so much love and of so many kinds? You require, then, a definition, an explanation of love? But nothing is in its nature less capable of a definition than love. He who requires a description of it, that he may recognise it, has certainly never met with it. But the Apostle does not mention one out of the many kinds of love, but love itself; and he who, in the true sense of the word, knows more than one love, cannot certainly understand him. However often our mind may have rested upon our epistle with pleasure, we may still need to ask what love is. In that case the words of the Apostle are not yet to us unsealed. There is nothing simpler than the love which the Apostle means. Love is nothing but the pure nature of a creature, whose Creator is very love itself, and who is essentially nothing but love. There is only one power in God, the power of love; and it is therefore original also in man, created after the image of God, and is the one pervading tendency in all the powers of life which unites them harmoniously in one vitality. In

paradise, love was life, and life love. Naturally, when this tendency is in man, he lays hold of all the divine gifts, and appropriates them harmoniously, for all gifts which come from God have in themselves a power of attraction towards their source.

Our Apostle means this most simple love of all, and from the nature of the question, it is only this which can be intended. Everything else that man calls love has only a distant resemblance to single outward parts of love. It is often, properly speaking, hatred and really not love at all. The love which we mean is alone capable of appropriating those above-mentioned divine gifts of grace. The creature attains to beauty only by his return into union and harmony with the Creator; to knowledge only by becoming one with Him in love. To love God is to recognise God and in Him all truth. The creature can have strength only by turning to Him who alone is powerful, from whom all gifts of strength come, and who gives to all men the power to strive to return to Himself.

II. The God of grace and condescension has stooped so far that He measures us according to our own standard. No virtue is of any value which only refers to Him, and does not really benefit our brethren. It would not help us if we had any kind of value before Him, but were worthless to mankind, to our brethren, to the world. We should still be reprobate in His sight. What gives us, we must therefore further ask ourselves, a true value for the world, for men? Again, it is nothing but love, and again nothing but what we have described—pure simple love of God in Jesus Christ.

Great and glorious gifts alone do not secure our active influence upon the greater or smaller circle of men in which God has placed us. The greatest talents and powers are liable to the greatest misuse, and may operate injuriously as well as wholesomely; yes, through the disorder of our nature, the misuse of them is, as may be easily understood, more frequent than the right use of them. But it is just as apparent that in the 'hand of love' they may be employed for the benefit of men.

The holy love of God is that which gives a true value to man for his brethren and the world. But our sinful race can love God only in Him through whom He first loved us,—in Jesus Christ. Learn, then, to believe on the Saviour, that thou mayest be able to love God through Him; love the Saviour without distraction, and thou wilt become of true and undoubted value for thy brethren; thou wilt become a citizen of this world who will be reckoned from among the many who are worthless.

III. But not only a citizen in this world,—thy citizenship is already in heaven. That is the last thing which we have to consider. Love alone brings our earthly life into a real relation to our eternal life,

and assures us of it. 'Charity never faileth,' writes the Apostle; 'but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.' Love alone remains in eternity; everything else, however noble it may be in itself, is only a gift,—a means towards an end. If the building of the inner man, that is to say, the building of love, is finished, the scaffolding is demolished. If thou hast not this pure love for God in Christ, and this is not thy proper life, thou wilt certainly take nothing with thee into eternity but guilt and the pain of death.

It is only through love that we stand in a real communion with the world of spirits, comprehend its language, and unite in its songs of praise. For love is the language of the spirit-world, the primitive language, the complete universal language of all beings created by God, which is understood in God, and in Him only, the language of God. It is the characteristic language of the Christian, already in this world—in thought, word, and deed. The world also most easily understands this language of the Christian; and accordingly as he speaks it more or less fluently is he more or less advanced in devotion. Let us prove the grounds of our hearts by this test. If we still stammer with the world, we have not yet put on the children's garment of Christianity. It is well for us, however, if we can say with S. Paul, 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things,'—that is to say, all that was not love. Love is our spiritual maturity.

R. ROTHE.

## Features of Charity.

*Charity doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.

I. CHARITY doth not behave itself unseemly. The expression in the original is still shorter. Its first meaning is this: is not shapeless, is not misshapen, is not indecorous, rude, or unmannerly. A strange element, we might think, in the composition of charity! Not indecorous, not rude, not unmannerly—what has that to do with charity? Reflect a little, and you will perceive that this also is no small thing to mention, and that it bears very directly upon the grace spoken of.

In this, as in other cases, we see a thing best by its opposite. Have we ever noticed such a thing as indecorum, unmannerliness, rudeness, in persons claiming to be Christians? Yes, it is sometimes made a

part of religion so to be. There are those who make what they call faithfulness the one virtue. They are so fearful of disguising their own convictions, and so fearful of encouraging carelessness or false security in others, that they run into an opposite extreme, and would obtrude upon the notice of every passer-by those truths or those feelings of which the whole value is in their depth and in their humility. It may be that there are some to whom God has given a peculiar power of startling others into conviction by a mode of presenting His truths which on other lips would be simply offensive and repulsive. There may be such persons, and He who has peculiarly endowed may peculiarly bless. But for others, for Christian persons generally, it is not safe to forget the special warning which Christ has given (in His own emphatic figure) against casting pearls before swine, or the remarkable feature here presented to us by this Apostle in the delineation of the grace of charity, that it is never unmannerly.

True Christian charity is deeply concerned about the souls of men, and would count no labour and no sacrifice too great if she might but save one. But charity is not rudeness, not impertinence, not self-sufficiency, and not arrogance. One part of charity is courtesy. And, depend upon it, courtesy, which is consideration for the feelings of others, will in the long-run win more souls to Christ than rudeness. Where we are sure that courtesy is genuine; not timidity, not time-serving, not a mere wish to please, but a delicacy of perception and a tenderness of feeling; there nothing is so attractive; attractive, not only in the sense of conciliating personal regard, but even in the sense of recommending godliness and drawing minds and hearts to Christ.

II. Secondly, charity seeketh not her own.

All seek their own, S. Paul complains, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. How true a saying! How prevalent, how almost universal, is the spirit of self-seeking! When man, in the fall, broke loose from God, he broke loose also from his brother. The natural man is not ungodly only; he is selfish too. In fact, it is only in God that hearts can really meet. It is only so far as it succeeds in turning both alike to God, that any ministry can be effectual (to use the language of the last verse of the Old Testament) in 'turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers': they meet in Him as their common centre.

In serving others, we may be thinking of ourselves, even without aiming at gratitude. We may do it as a duty, as a means of gaining good for ourselves, of promoting our own salvation, or even with some lingering relics of an idea of merit. Do not think that I would strain too far the demand of a disinterested motive. It is well for the world that charity should work in it anyhow, from any motive. And it is far better, even for ourselves, that we should be diligent in the service

of others, whatever the imperfection of our motive, than not diligent And we may pass through lower motives to higher; gradually purifying our work from the dross of selfishness as we go on and get forward. Still I think that it is good for us, both as an exercise of salutary humiliation, and still more as a means of casting out evil from our hearts and lives, to contemplate the diviner form of a real Christian charity as it is set before us in the pages of Holy Scripture: to remind ourselves, for example, that then only is charity perfect, even as its Source and its Inspirer is perfect, when in no sense it seeks its own; when neither the desire of human applause or human gratitude, nor even the desire of self-improvement, much less of self-approval or self-justifying, has any place in it, but the heart has learnt something of that most sublime of all exercises of self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice to which S. Paul had risen when he wrote the memorable though sometimes misunderstood sentence, 'I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.'

III. The text tells us that 'charity is not easily provoked.' I fear we must confess that the word *easily* is no part of the verse as S. Paul wrote it. Whence it crept in, I know not. Whether it was really felt that the rule was beyond human reach without it; or whether some mere accident occasioned its insertion; these questions are comparatively unimportant: but I fear that we must read the words without modification, 'Charity is not provoked.'

It is not said that charity is never angry. On the contrary, we read of our Lord Himself that on one occasion He looked round upon an audience 'with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' And the same holy Apostle, whose words are now before us, writes elsewhere, 'Be ye angry, and sin not': implying that all anger is not sinful. It is right to be indignant at some things: we may well wish that there were more amongst us than there is of righteous indignation at things mean and shameful, acts of revenge and lust and cruelty. S. Paul says of himself, 'Who is offended,' that is, caused to offend, hindered and injured in his Christian course, 'and I burn not?' that is, with holy anger on his behalf.

'Charity is not provoked' refers to different matters. It follows closely upon, and indeed springs directly out of the foregoing particular, 'seeketh not her own.' Selfishness, self-pleasing, and self-seeking, is the common cause of provocation. If we had no self in us we should not be provoked, no, not once in a thousand times, as we now are. How seldom does provocation really arise out of disinterested care for the good of others! How seldom are we, like our Lord, simply grieved because of the hardness of another's heart; simply concerned to think of the dishonour done to God, and the risk brought upon a brother's soul by unbelief, ungodliness, and sin. If we would

be of any use one to another; if we would move in the world as Christ's witnesses, whether among equals or among inferiors; we must pray without ceasing for a gentle and a loving soul; even for 'that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'

IV. 'Charity thinketh no evil.' This is a different thing from 'Charity believeth all things, or hopeth all things,' of which we read below. Thinketh no evil is, properly, reckoneth not that which is evil. In other words, Christian charity is shown in not keeping an account of injuries or of unkindnesses; in not registering and recording acts or words of neglect, contempt, or wrong; in not entering such things in the tablets of memory, as if for a future day of human reckoning or of divine retribution. Some minds are strangely tenacious of such things.

Let us have new tablets this Lent! Let us agree to cancel all outstanding debts! Let us turn our thoughts from earthly dues to heavenly; from things owing to us to things owing by us; yes, owing by us both to man and God! Let us start afresh! Let charity reckon no evil: let charity destroy her old account-books, and forget the past! We cannot deal with our own sins till we have done with those of others. 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,' or thou thyself (might we not venture to add?) against thy brother, 'leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'

DEAN VAUGHAN.

## Individual Faithfulness.

*Love seeketh not her own.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.

I. THE reason why no sincere worker for God is long left with nothing to do is that God's ways of work are very manifold. Martha is working in one way while she is providing for her Lord, Mary in another while she listens humbly at His feet; Elijah works in one way when he scorches up Jezebels and Baal priests with words of flame, Elisha in another among courts and quiet homes; Savonarola serves his Lord in one way with his mighty thunderings, Fra Angelico in another with his soft pictures. 'All flesh is not the same flesh; one star differeth from another star in glory.' But however small the taper, however dim the flame, every one of us may at least

uplift his flickering rush-light in the great illumination. In nature the lion pacing the moonlight sands shows God's glory, and so does the bee murmuring in the foxglove's bell; the pink shell on the shore fulfils its appointed functions as perfectly as leviathan whitening the tempestuous seas. Nor is it otherwise in the world of men, and because we are infinitely below the highest there is no reason why we should herd with the basest and most unclean. If we cannot soar as eagles, let us at least fly with sparrows. The man with one talent may more laudably and more faithfully serve God than he with five.

For bad and selfish men; for religionists whose whole religion is party, and who live only to squabble with and to slander their brethren; for the many rich and the many poor whose one aim it is to feed to the full their own hearts' lusts, the days may be at hand when the lightnings which now flicker on the horizon shall blaze about their heads. But if a man be among the very humblest of the faithful—

> He shall not dread misfortune's angry mien,
> Nor idly sink beneath her onset rude.

II. This faithfulness, then, is incumbent on every one of us. Think not that to do our duty in life, to give back to God something better than the crumbling dust of corrupting bodies and the leprosy of dwarfed and dwindling souls, needs on our part any magnificent theatre, any superhuman endeavours, any unobtainable eminences. That is not it; it needs only to travel round the quiet walk with God, to which every one of us is pledged by baptism.

Externals will not save us, neither fast nor feast, nor service, nor general respectability, nor religious scrupulosity, nor to bow the head like a bulrush, nor to say, 'Lord, Lord!' nor will anything avail us but that life of obedience which is the true test of the forgiven penitent. For every one of us, until we have exchanged the state of sin for the state of grace, there is but one first message to begin with: 'Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' Do this, and it shall be well with you and well with England, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Beyond all doubt it is the carelessness as to these individual duties which makes the world what it is. It is the neglect which comes of personal sinfulness and the personal insincerity of millions. To hearts once purified from self and touched by the grace of God nothing is dearer than to help earth's immense and trampled multitudes by saving souls for which Christ died. Be not deceived. A bad man cannot do good, and a good man cannot do otherwise.

# QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

To take a personal part in considering the poor, tending the sick, teaching the young—that is most blessed work, not open or possible to all; but there are hundreds of you here to whom it would be most easily possible who yet refuse its duty and its blessedness. What are you doing to improve the general theory and practice of our modern life? What are you doing to set before your fellow-men the example of loftier ideals, to create in England a nobler and more Christian public opinion, to bring up your households in the true faith and fear of God, to show that life was not meant for vulgar ambition and yet more vulgar comfort worship, but that we might serve God here and enjoy Him for ever in heaven hereafter? Ask yourselves searchingly, every one of you: 'Am I doing any harm in the world?' and if you are able to lay your hand upon your heart before your God, and to answer 'No' to that question, then ask yourselves individually the second question, and ask it as searchingly before your God: 'Am I doing any good?'

In conclusion, say not that these are but trivial things, wherewith to avert the lurid menace of the sky. They are the only means which God gives individually to you; they are sufficient means; they are the means required by God Himself. Individual faithfulness! Without that there is no remedy. Even were it no remedy God still says to you: 'Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou Me.' If we save ourselves by taking hold of the salvation which Christ has provided for us, we help to save the world. With three hundred of the faithful Gideon routed the Amalekites; ten righteous men would have sufficed to save Sodom from its rain of fire. On the side of the mighty tower you see a thin and fragile rod. That rod saves the mighty tower; it attracts the all-shattering electric flame with which the stormy air is full, and conveys it harmlessly into the earth. Such a lightning-rod is every man to the city and the nation to which he belongs. His one desire will be to win some, to do some good for his fellow-men, and, if need be, even to perish in winning it. We cannot at the best do, individually, much. We have but one life given us—but one second, that is, in God's eternity—to do it in; but it becomes majestic as part of one great living whole, and every true life is only a true life at all in so far as it is the echo and the continuation of the one great life of love, of which the one object was to seek and to save the lost.

DEAN FARRAR.

# OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

## Unfailing Love.

*Charity never faileth.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 8.

I. TEMPERAMENT has, we are often told, a great deal to do with religion; and if we use the word in its old-fashioned sense, we are not without experience of the truth of the saying; it certainly does make a great difference as to the way in which men look on things in general, and on the principles and conduct of religion in particular. But temperament in common language means a good deal more than the physical admixture of certain constitutional ingredients; it is almost equivalent to character in its application to individual, family, and national features of mind, habit, and temper. And thus expanded, it certainly plays a very great and conspicuous part in religious history.

In one aspect religion forms character; in another, character so modifies religion, in almost all departments of its working, that it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that in everything but the inseparable and essential basis of spiritual life, it may be said to form it; not creating, but moulding and fashioning, and setting it in relation to external life, and other modes of thinking of life, and the ways, beliefs, and practices of other men. And I suppose that this mutual action of the two elements constitutes a considerable factor in the production of that condition of things in which the world at large, and Christendom especially, now finds itself.

We believe that the truth of Christianity and the picture of the example of Jesus, which, for instance, we have in the epistle of this morning, is an universal truth and an universal example, a truth which should satisfy all instincts and an example that should mould all temperaments; still the truth itself and the law of the example, like the light of the sun which is the figure of it, strikes different eyes variously according to their point of view, and breaks into rays of prismatic colouring which depends for its realisation on the varied capacity of the beholder or the special media by which it is apprehended. The varied temperaments catch the light of different angles, and in different attitudes.

II. With all the diversities of temperament, there is but one and the same human nature; man, in all climates, under all constitutions, with all sorts of histories, traditions, and disciplines, is essentially the same, with body and soul, heart and affections, mind and spirit, in the same conformation, the same passions, the same capacities, the same liabilities to temptation. The human nature which the Saviour took was integral human nature, and the law of the example, which

He gave us is a law which, with the acceptance of the means that He gives us of obeying it, is fitted for the common constitution of all men. There is no temperament, or nationality, or the like, to which the Sermon on the Mount is unintelligible, or the picture of the most excellent gift of charity an ideal which is transcendental in its unmeaningness. In putting this first I am not setting the doctrinal side of Christianity apart as below the moral, simply proceeding on the teaching that to those who do His will the revelation of His doings shall be made clear. 'He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him.' So far forth Christianity is an universal religion, and out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, they come, to whom the gospel as everlasting, has been preached, who join in the triumph of the Lamb.

III. The diversity of men's views and interpretations of the truth of the gospel is no more an objection to the reality of that truth than it is to the reality of any other possible resentment of truth. But whilst we claim finality and universality for the truth of the gospel, we do not pretend that the complete vindication of its unity and indivisibility is as yet accorded; nor that it will be, until all partiality and speciality of human vision is taken away. Until then we see in part, and prophesy in part. We seize on a principle and work it out, logically it may be, but independently; if all the minds employed on such studies could work equably and logically together, the consistency of the expansion would be vindicated speedily, for one would correct and limit, interpret and combine with another, although even then men would still insist on the greater cogency of the particular they had themselves developed. The day will certainly come when, to those who wait for it, this unity and indivisibility of the truth, and of the Church of God which is the pillar and ground of it, will be made manifest; the day when we shall know who now believe, and they who have despised shall wonder and perish. But what, whilst we are waiting, what about our own realisation of such part of the truth as has become real to us? Are we to undervalue it because it is certainly not the whole of the truth, or are we to surrender it because others, with whom we want to agree, reject it and expect us to give up our measure of life for peace' sake? Once for all, let us be quite sure that the universality, unity, and finality of gospel truth will never be vindicated by the throwing away of such sections of it as have been realised severally by thoughtful and faithful men. The revelation of the integrity of the truth, in God's due time, will prove the certainty of such partial views of it as men, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, have worked out in this life, even to

the reconciling of what are seeming contradictions, by showing its consistency in proportion and connection. Constituted as we are, by the very nature of the faith that is in us, we are bound to hold fast that which we have realised; we will not let go the measure of light that is vouchsafed to us; we will not confuse it with other lights that are not vouched for to us by the same proofs or by like experience. The final revelation will justify those who believe, holding the truth, not in confusion, but in love.

BISHOP STUBBS.

## Childish Things.

*When I became a man, I put away childish things.* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

I. WHAT are the childish things you must put away if you would be true soldiers and servants of Christ? First of all, put away idleness. Work is noble, idleness is contemptible. The idle man cumbers the ground. How can you waste your time and yet be of service to Him who said, 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work'? It is not a question so much of working so many hours on any particular day, but of letting no day pass without doing some work. *Nulla dies sine lineâ.* The addition of so much as a line to the picture is not without its value, if only a line be added every day.

II. And for the second, which is closely allied to the first—put away thoughtlessness. Most of us have serious convictions deep down in our hearts, but how often these convictions are disguised under a veil of frivolity. What a pity it is that so many of us, though anxious to make a favourable impression on our neighbours, hide from them what is best and exhibit what is least good.

III. Put away carelessness, I mean carelessness especially in matters of religion. The foundation of religious faith is, I will say not shaken, but seriously assailed. It is not enough to put away childish things, but to put on Christ in His humility, His purity and His love, is the mission to which God calls you in your time.

J. E. C. WELLDON.

## Childhood and Manhood.

*When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

'WHEN I became a man!' It is the man that meets us in S. Paul, the grown man in energetic possession of all that lends force and purpose to our completed manhood. He has thrown

away behind him all the preliminaries that belong to childhood. Childhood is suggestive, tentative, experimental. It feels lazily about on all sides, testing the various paths open to it, anxious only to try them all and to pledge itself to none. It loves the manifold, the new, the changing, the indefinite. It wants to taste this and touch that, and ever to pass on, ever to pursue that which is always on the edge of being caught. Hope beckons, hope calls, like the cuckoo's cry which passes 'from hill to hill, at once far off and near.' So childhood roams and rambles and wanders; it cannot be fixed or combined. The world is a magic home, and there is no limit to the wonders that it may hold concealed. Childhood obeys its own impressions, and at one moment it would saunter, at another it would hurry and race, and then nothing must check it. Childhood dreams, it moves along in imaginative musings, it hangs over running streams, it falls asleep to the babbling waters. All this is what childhood means; this is its charm, its glory.

And all this S. Paul has left behind him. If we look for any of this in him we shall find none of it. It is passed and over, the delicious day of expansion and ease and splendid illusion. All his boats are burnt, he can never go back; every fragment of his life to come must take its colour from an imperious decision. By it he is made or marred for ever. Right on into the eternity beyond death, he will still be stamped with its hand; he will be the man who pledged himself in that fashion, who sent his whole raft down that channel, who made that great and final committal. That S. Paul had done, and in doing it he had achieved the supreme and heroic end of manhood, for our manhood wins its realisation in the conscious surrender of itself to a recognised purpose of God. This is its peculiar priesthood; in this it obtains its freedom, the freedom of a man who is no longer a child, subject to masters and guardians, and agencies that direct him from without; no longer a child, under the tyranny of passions and powers that sway him hither and thither; he knows not why or how he has become a man, a master of himself, and in the right of that self-mastery has stepped out into the open and has made, there in the eye of God, the deed of dedication.

II. We somehow still go on asking of religion but one thing—that it should make us happy. Directly it asks more of us than this, directly it enforces more uncomfortable demands, we cannot make it out; we are angry and disappointed. Yes, is not this to insist that faith should not only begin in the temper and spirit of a child, but that it should end there—should never grow up, should incur the responsibilities of manhood? A child asks how to be happy, but a man asks how to serve, how to work, how to do something, how to decide, how to push a resolution through, how to persevere to the

end, how to fight it out, how to spend himself. That is 'the man,' that is his part, and for this he must ask with reason instead of impulse, with precise intentions rather than vague visions, with trained and chastened determination instead of buoyant aspiration. He obeys the sterner stress. Everybody accepts this lot in secular affairs; why not in religion? True, the child-heart must still prompt and kindle the inward motions of faith, but the actual work to be achieved by faith as the days go on must more and more be taken up by those tougher ministers, the deliberate reason, the disciplined will. These are the capacities that come forward to take up the running, as it were, as the early impetus fails. Our faith (we are to learn) is not a private joy only, but a public servant. It has a task to fulfil, an obligation to meet, a warfare to press, a society to enrich. It cannot undertake those duties while it remains in a child-state, while it asks how can it be happy. It must become a man, it must pass up into the necessities that accompany manhood. A man must think, where a child would feel; a man must be conscious of what he is about, where a child can afford to follow its own inspiration. It must be so; to deny it in religion is to assert that in religion we must for ever remain children, that there is no room in religion for the exercise of a man's special capacities of reason and resolution, no opportunity for a man's peculiar service.

And one more note of this manly life will appear if we are true to our proper growth. Not only will our faith become thoughtful and conscious, and therefore dogmatic, but our life will have in it the touch of asceticism, of mortification. Here again, we recoil. Is not the Christian faith in God, the good Father, in the incarnate Son? Does it not sanction and hallow all human joys, all earthly beauty? Was not all made by God? Is not our heart set free to leap and sing and be glad in the house of the will? Why scourge and discipline and pain? There it is again, the childhood of faith still speaking. As a child let it learn that all things become new, that all things can be innocent, can be pure. 'Let it taste and see how gracious the Lord is.' But as a man it has a definite task; it must make its choice, it must bend itself to the work. And this narrows the field, this fixes the bands, and for this the heart must be curbed, and the body mastered, buffeted, bruised, until it be conformed to the service of Him who was bound with cords and stripped and scourged.

CANON SCOTT HOLLAND.

# QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

## Through a Glass, darkly.

*Now we see through a glass, darkly.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 12.

THOSE who have read the history of early Christianity, by one of the most brilliant and refined of French writers, will recall a passage in which he condemns S. Paul for never undergoing, at least in the close of his life, that disenchantment which is supposed to be the lot of every great mind. 'S. Paul,' he says, 'is not free from the defect which repels us in all sectaries: he believes stolidly. We should wish him at times, like ourselves, to sit wearied beside the road, and to recognise the vanity of all fixed opinions.' (Renan, *L'Antéchrist*, pp. 101 ff.) The sure faith of S. Paul is so alien to the temper of the writer that he cannot forgive the Apostle for retaining to the end that triumphant assurance which bears him on through the difficulties and dangers of his earlier career. Is there not in such a passage a touch of levity that mars the effect of a work regarded from a literary point of view, as well as a lack of the tenderness and sympathy without which no right estimate of a great personality can ever be formed? S. Paul certainly was in no danger of coming to regard his whole life as a long mistake. But he had undergone all through his career that kind of disenchantment which comes to every one who goes outside his own door, and labours on behalf of any cause, however excellent. S. Paul had borne the severest trials both in his outer and in his inner experience. He endured afflictions, necessities, distresses; without were fightings, within were fears; and lest he should glory in the revelation vouchsafed to him, the thorn in the flesh was laid on him, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. In his converts he was disappointed. Men he trusted fell away from him. Some could not rise to the height of Christian liberty, and fled back to the bondage from which Christ had set them free: others relapsed into sin such as was not even named among the Gentiles. As time went on the perversions of error increased—error the more insidious because it had the form of godliness but denied the power thereof. Even the gifts which were poured out by the Spirit on the Church might be abused; and the Apostle had to recall his hearers from these outward signs to a more excellent way. It is impossible to think of trial and disappointment which S. Paul had not experienced. But he cannot be disenchanted of his faith in Christ: every fresh shock only strengthens it. So it must have been till the end. Nothing short of a miracle in human nature could have have changed the belief which, in spite of every adverse circumstance, had been growing and deepening for a lifetime. In the supreme hour, of which

we know so little, we are yet justly sure that the Apostle was upheld by Him on whom He trusted, and that then, as in his lifetime, the teaching of the Crucified bore its ripened fruit: 'My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness.'

But S. Paul with all the certainty of his faith confesses that here 'we see through a glass, darkly.' The Greek is not literally rendered in the Authorised Version. But whatever be the exact meaning of the original, it affirms, even more emphatically than the current translation, the enigmatical character of truth, and the imperfection of the organs by which it is apprehended. A similar thought is somewhat differently expressed in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.' Perfection belongs only to God. Even His chosen vessels are of earth, and the truth which they are commissioned to declare is obscured by the inherent defects of the human agencies which are its ministers.

I. The principle which S. Paul here enunciates has far-reaching applications. I shall confine myself to one of the consequences which directly flow from it—the need of patience in the intellectual treatment of religious truth,—which is yet consistent with an assurance in which our nature, like that of S. Paul, may repose.

The discussion of religious problems has long been forced on the attention of every one. It has always had an attraction for English writers and thinkers, though from time to time the arguments vary and the centre of interest shifts its position. Even those who acknowledge that such questions have to be faced may regret the necessity forced on them. The trusting faith, which is the natural attitude of so many of the most refined as well as of the simplest intellects, is not always possible. There are many minds, masculine as well as feminine, for whose intellectual as well as moral and spiritual development it would be better to set these questions aside, and either in the pursuit of knowledge, or in the quiet performance of their daily duties, to preserve unchanged and unchallenged the pious beliefs and practices of a childlike faith. But we must acknowledge facts. Such questions have become a staple of popular literature; they are not and cannot be secluded from the field of popular discussion. The search after religious truth makes higher demands on the moral even than on the mental qualities of the student. Yet with how light a spirit it is often handled. The subject has to be properly treated, and therefore has to be presented in clear outline, so that the ordinary reader may feel that he has the whole question in a nutshell, that he has disposed of it, and can now pass on to something else.

There are men who, in the maturity of their powers, do not come back upon the hasty conclusions of their early days in respect to the

faith of Christ. It is a subject which is excepted from patient and careful review. They are content to ignore the mass of evidence which, as life goes on, comes through the intellectual as well as the moral and spiritual faculties; content to be separated from the great body of their fellow-men, and to be alien from the deepest sympathies that bind them together in all the most important concerns of life on this side of the grave, as well as in the faith that looks beyond.

II. I have touched on the unbelief into which men are often led by the desire for a premature intellectual certainty. But we must not forget that S. Paul is here speaking to Christians. He is writing as a disciple of Christ to his fellow-disciples. They too may forget that here we see through a glass darkly, and that the treasure of divine truth is contained in earthen vessels. The whole tenor of this thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, which sets Christian love above any outward signs or any intellectual knowledge, is inconsistent with that spirit of absolutism which has asserted itself in various forms and degrees within the Church as well as without.

We all want certainty: it is a natural desire and cannot be doomed to perpetual disappointment. There are beliefs which come home to the mind with invincible force, though we may refuse to acknowledge the claims of any one absolute system. Faith may be real and yet recognise the limitations that surround it, and are to be removed only by degrees and by many different agencies. But the certainty of faith cannot be won by any intellectual system, or forced upon us by any external authority. It is not manufactured, it grows on the soil prepared for it. Those who live by it find that sidelights fall on it from various quarters, as on all living thoughts in the mind, and they need not be curious to analyse the process by which it comes to be the ruling certainty of their lives. But religion has no feud with logic. We may still regard it as the instrument of truth; only it must be a logic that bends to facts, and does not seek to override them; a logic that discovers the thread of connection in the known phenomena of mind and of nature, and does not substitute its own theories, however consistent, for the order of the world.

W. W. JACKSON.

## The Divine Knowledge.

*Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know, even also as I am known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

NOW we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I am known fully. What joy, what exultation, what ardour, what longing

there is in these words! They carry us far on and far away—far on beyond this present time of this passing world, far away from the scenes of this present life. 'Then'—when time and change and varying seasons are past—then, when the alterations of cloud and sunshine are over—when doubt, and difficulty, and perplexity have been left behind—when the strife and struggle and toil of the mind in its effort to reach the truth has come to an end—then I shall know fully. Then, in a sense more complete than the words have ever yet borne, I shall be able to say, 'The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.' Then and there—in the place, wherever it may be, where God shall let me see His face—there I shall see face to face. For a moment we almost seem to be side by side with the Apostle, and to be following his upturned eye, and to be fixing our gaze where his is fixed. Already that eye has pierced the veil. His vision has reached the innermost shrine. The same longing was stirred in him which filled the hearts of S. Augustine and S. Monica, when they sat, the dear son's hand resting in his mother's hand, when, after all his wanderings and battlings to reach the truth, the son had come home to God, and both looked out over the sea, their eyes and their souls straining after the shore of everlasting life and light.

But for what was the Apostle's heart yearning? He was yearning for the full knowledge of God (ἐπίγνωσις). Yes, but what made him yearn for that knowledge? Because he had known the joy of knowledge. 'Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully.' He had tasted of the joy of knowledge, but every draught only made him thirst the more after streams more satisfying than any which this world can give. 'My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?'

I. But is, then, knowledge a joy? Surely, yes. The problem solved, the fresh discovery, or the opening of a path leading to a fresh discovery, the learning of a new language, the finer sense of the power and force of an old language, the unravelling of the history of the past, the first acquaintance with a new branch of science, the clearing up of some obscurity, the breaking in of new light,—are not all these fraught with the keenest enjoyment? And yet does not every advance in knowledge make us eager for a further advance still, as mountain-climbers find fresh peaks still luring them on to the delight of further efforts? Are we not ready to cry out again and again with the Apostle, 'We know only in part'? And if this be so with all forms of mere earthly knowledge, must it not be far more so with heavenly knowledge? Does the knowledge of earthly things bring the highest joy to the mind that the heart can taste of? Oh! not so, not so indeed. These strange powers which we possess of thought,

of reflection, of consideration, of meditation, of insight, of memory, of intuition, of investigation, were not given us that they might be spent only on what one of our own poets calls so well 'these earth-born idols of this lower air.' There is a point beyond all these to which all these various kinds of knowledge should lead us. We were created with all our powers of mind that we might know God. Not in vain has theology been called 'Scientiarum Scientia.' The science of all sciences is the knowledge of God. To know Him—what He has done for man, what He is to man, what man is to Him, nay, what He is to Himself, to know at once the tenderness of His love and the mystery of His Being—this is the highest exercise of man's mind, this is the purest joy of man's heart, this is the only one true aim of life, this alone can be called life; this is the life the pulses of which begin to beat within us in this world, this is the life which swells out into its full perfection in the world to come, for 'this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.'

II. It was the joy of this knowledge which was filling the Apostle's heart when he wrote these words, 'Then shall I know fully, even as also I am known fully.' His whole being was thrilling with a joy of the past and of the present, and he was being borne, as it were, on the crest of this wave of joy on to the shore of a fuller and unending joy. Already he knows God in the tenderness of His fatherhood, in the fulness of His pardoning love, in the atonement wrought out by the Son of God, in the might of the indwelling Spirit, in the richness of the gifts poured out on, poured into the Church. That knowledge has grown upon him more and more since the day when the pleading voice of his Lord broke in upon him with the question, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' and won his heart to service of the Crucified. Toil and suffering, labouring among the multitude, and solitary wrestlings of his own soul in prayer, have brought home to him with increasing clearness the love, the strength, the supporting power, the majesty of God, and of God's claims upon him. In speaking, in writing, in winning others to the faith, in opening out to them the mysteries of the faith, the fulness and glory of the revelation has filled him more and more with light. 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Every past revelation has brought to him an increase of faith, of hope, of love, of peace, of happiness, and joy, and has taught him to realise more fully what will be the exceeding bliss of the complete revelation of God to those who are brought to see Him face to face. So rejoicing, so hoping, so exulting, so expecting, so yearning, he cries out, 'Then shall I know fully, even as also I am fully known.' All bars, all hindrances, all veils will be withdrawn, all clouds of error, of mistake,

of misapprehension, will be swept away, as mists are drawn up and dispelled by the outshining of the sun, and at last I shall see God in all, and all in God, know what He has been to me, what has been the meaning of His dealing with me all through life, yea, even know Himself as He knows me.

III. And now let us see how the joy of this knowledge came so to grow in the mind of S. Paul. First, clearly, because he set himself with intense earnestness to receive in all its vividness and distinctness the revelation that came from God. He felt deeply the tenderness of God in making known the truth. He felt as strongly the responsibility of man for receiving into his mind the fulness of truth in all its purity, in preserving it from all error that might dim or disturb it. No doubt ever crossed his mind that God could be known. Still less did he question the power of God to reveal Himself. How should not the best of all Fathers teach His children? How should He not yearn more than any human teacher to impart knowledge to those who were willing to learn? The Apostle might have conceived it possible that in a place like this some human teachers might keep their stores of knowledge to themselves, and not use them to help others. Human selfishness might make this conceivable. But the yearning love of God for His children would not let Him leave them without the light of truth.

Then quick upon the thought of this love of God came the feeling that if God is so loving as to tell to His children the secrets of their own nature—their sin, their fall, the way of their recovery, and of their union with Himself, nay, if God goes further still and tells them even the secrets of the mystery of His own being, then the children in very gratitude must be ready to learn in its fulness the lessons that the Heavenly Father has given them.

To us, as to S. Paul, the knowledge will bring a higher joy than any other kind of knowledge can bring. In us, as in him, it will waken up a thirst for a fuller, a more complete knowledge. To us, as to him, the knowledge which we have already as a gift from God will be a pledge that it is the will of God to carry to their highest perfection the revelations which even here have been so full of joy. And we too, looking on beyond the sorrows and trials, the toils of mind, and the sinkings of heart which fall to our lot now, beyond our mistakes, our infirmities of faith, our failings, our falls, our sins, and our penitences, shall dare to say, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I am fully known.' DEAN RANDALL.

# QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

## Present Knowledge and Future.

*For now we see through a glass, darkly: but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

WE reach to-day what may be called, without disparagement to others, the most beautiful of all the Sunday epistles. That short chapter which records the workings and celebrates the praises of charity or Christian love has been familiar to all of us from childhood. If it had been always made, as it ought to have been, the touchstone of Christianity in communities and in individuals; if the confession of a true faith had been made to consist less in the correct enunciation of an obstruse doctrine, and more in the watchful maintenance of a spirit of love, it would have been well for the cause of Christ on earth, and well for the souls of His people both in this world and in that which is to come. Let us pray for a special blessing on the brief consideration of this glorious passage to-day.

This chapter forms what a human critic might call an episode in the epistle. But not on that account is it without its link before and after. S. Paul is speaking of those spiritual gifts, on the possession of which the congregation at Corinth was so much priding itself; priding itself with little appreciation either of the aim of all gifts—the spiritual good of others—or of the relative value of the various gifts as measured by this standard. 'Covet earnestly,' he says in the last verse of the preceding chapter, 'the greater gifts'; that is, the higher and the better because the more practical and profitable gifts; 'and yet show I unto you a more excellent way:' there is something higher and greater yet than any gift: take heed that ye miss not that one straight, unerring road to life, from which there are so many paths diverging, which end not in life but in death.

I. The imperfection of our present knowledge of divine things is here said to be twofold; an imperfection of kind, and an imperfection of degree.

1. An imperfection of kind. This again is illustrated by two comparisons.

(1) 'We see by means of a mirror.' What we see at present is a sort of reflection of truth, not the very truth itself. A mirror may be very useful; but it can never give the accurate idea of the very figure, the very person, presented in it. If its copy of the person be ever so accurate, still it is not defective only, it is also misleading: the right side has become the left, and the left hand in the picture is awkwardly performing the functions of the right hand in the original: thus the effect produced is different, however carefully represented

the details and the particulars. A mirror, too, can hold but one image at a time: if it be preoccupied by one figure, it is unavailable for another. And if, in addition to these essential defects of accuracy and limitations of capacity, there be also the slightest flaw in the glass or cloud upon the surface, there is an end at once of all beauty and of all truth in the representation, and what was before only defective becomes now a distortion and a caricature. And how much more expressive would be the figure in the Apostle's days, when not glass but stone or metal was commonly used for the purpose spoken of; when the colouring therefore of every object must have been lost in the reflection, and nothing would remain but a meagre and blurred outline to carry to the eye the impression of face or figure or landscape!

By such a reflection as this, S. Paul says, we at present behold the things of God. We: yes, even he; even the man who had actually seen Jesus Christ, and had been caught up in vision to the third heaven. Well may we speak thus; we, whose knowledge and whose faith must be at the very best immeasurably inferior. It is with us, and far more literally, as it was even with the great lawgiver of old who desired to see God's glory. 'Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live. . . . While My glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by; and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see that which is behind of Me,' the reflection left by Me in the mirror as I pass by, 'but My face shall not be seen.

(2) Again, 'we see,' as it is here added, 'darkly'; but, as the marginal reading gives it more correctly, in a riddle, or enigma, or dark saying. Our present knowledge is imperfect in kind for this second reason also, that it is all, when regarded in comparison with that knowledge which shall be, and with that reality of truth which already is, enigmatical and not literal. Our present knowledge comes to us through words. Revelation itself has to be framed for us into words. All the deep things of God, which we can entertain in our minds at all, have to be embodied for our contemplation, for our examination, for our use, in words. Now think for a moment what words are. An inestimable treasure, doubtless; the very currency of thought and reason: but surely, when applied to some subjects, a mere expedient, inadequate at once, and temporary. There is a perpetual tendency in us to confound words with things, the sign with the thing signified. Half our theological controversies are illustrations of this error. A little calm mutual explanation of the terms employed, often a very little time spent in careful definition, would have closed them peaceably. This is an ungrateful use of God's gifts. He gives us words, to make the best approach that we

can at present make to some faint knowledge of Himself; and then we turn these words into weapons, into stumbling-blocks, into idols: we begin by fighting with them, and we end by fighting for them.

2. The imperfection of our present knowledge is in degree also. 'I know in part.' Our present knowledge is partial.

It is indeed but a brief hint which I can give at any part of the vast subject. And upon this point I will only call you to notice that our great difficulty at present in religion is how to combine. We know in part. We have several portions of divine truth communicated to us, but in very many cases a connecting link is at present wanting. Everything in revelation is true; but our faith is exercised, and our humility is exercised, and our patience is exercised in having so little light as to how this and that in revelation can both be true. Many examples will rise in every mind as I speak. The mercy of God, and the justice of God. The almighty power of God, and the obstinate resistance of that power by souls refusing to be saved. God's hatred of sin, and God's permission of the existence of evil. Man's free will, and God's free grace. The efficacy of prayer, and God's foreknowledge and unchangeable purpose. The perfect happiness of the blessed, and the coexistent misery of the finally condemned. Our knowledge, you observe, is in part. We know each of two things, but we cannot put them together. The real difficulty is in the combination. Meanwhile we do not doubt that God sees them all in one. And 'what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' So that we reach the second and far more glorious part of our subject, and have to set in contrast with the present imperfection the future perfection of our knowledge.

II. And here also we have two illustrations.

1. I shall see 'face to face.' Our knowledge of truth hereafter will be, first, direct; and secondly, personal.

It will not be any longer a process of reflection, but a process of intuition. There will be no imperfect, no inverted, no distorted, images of things then; no inadequate representation, and no defective reception, of truth then; it will be all viewed directly, immediately, with nothing interposed between us and it, either to temper its rays or to discipline our vision.

And this direct knowledge will be a personal knowledge also. 'Face to face' implies a person. We shall see the very 'glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' But our words here must be few and reverent, lest we seem to forget that the thing spoken of is itself at present seen but 'in a glass, darkly.'

2. Again, 'then shall I know, even as also I am known.' Our knowledge of divine things hereafter will be of the same character with that knowledge of us which God has had through this life. A

very solemn word; and greatly do we need it. We cannot hope, in eternity, to know God better than He, through this life, has known each of us. I will say two things of this knowledge. First, that it will be thorough; and secondly, that it will be comprehensive.

The contrast between the present imperfection and the future perfection of a Christian's knowledge must make no one idle in the pursuit of truth below. They who seek not here will never find there. It is they who seize and treasure and count over and use the separate fragments here vouchsafed to them of eternal truth, who will alone be capable of apprehending hereafter the key which is to unlock the mysterious treasury which contains it all. In this sense, as in many others, 'whosoever hath, to him shall be given.'

DEAN VAUGHAN.

## The First Five Minutes after Death.

*Then shall I know even as also I am known.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 12.

AN Indian officer, who had seen in his time a great deal of service, and had taken part in more than one of those decisive struggles by which the British authority was at length established in the East Indies, had returned to end his days in this country, and was talking with his friends about the most striking experiences of his professional career. They led him, by their sympathy and by their questions, to travel in memory over a long series of years; and, as he described skirmishes, battles, sieges, personal encounters, hairbreadth escapes, outbreaks of mutiny and suppressions of mutiny, reverses, victories—all the swift alternations of anxiety and hope which a man must know who is intrusted with the responsibility of commanding, and before the enemy—their interest in his story, as was natural, became keener and more exacting; and at last he paused, with the observation, 'I expect to see something much more remarkable than anything I have been describing.' As he was some seventy years of age, and was understood to have retired from active service, his listeners failed to catch his meaning. There was a pause, and then he said, in an undertone, 'I mean in the first five minutes after death.' 'The first five minutes after death!'—surely the expression is worth remembering, if only as that of a man to whom the life to come was evidently a great and solemn reality.

I. First, at our entrance to another state of existence, we shall know what it is to exist under entirely new conditions. Here we are bound up—we hardly, perhaps, suspect to what an extent—in thought, in affection, with the persons and objects around us. They influence

us subtly and powerfully in a thousand ways. In some cases they altogether shape and take possession of our lives. It has been truly said that in every life much more is taken for granted than is ever noticed. The mind is eagerly directed to the few persons and subjects which affection or interest force prominently upon its notice. It gazes inertly at all the rest. As we should say, it does not take them in until some accident arises which forces them one by one into its view. A boy never knows what his home was worth until he has gone for the first time to school, and then he misses—and, as he misses, eagerly recollects and realises—all that he has left behind him. Who of us that has experienced it can ever forget that first going away from home to school—that moment when the partings were over and the carriage drove away from the door and we heard the last of the wheels and of the horses as they went round the corner, and then we turned, in our desolation, to find ourselves in a new world, among strange faces, in strange scenes, under a new, and, perhaps, a sterner government? Then, for the first time, and at a distance from it, we found out what our home had been to us. It was more to us in memory than it had ever been while we were in it. All that we saw and heard and had to do and had to give up at school quickened by the mere sense of contrast, our memory of what had been the rule of home and of its large liberty, of its gentle looks and words, of its scenes and haunts, which had taken such a hold on our hearts without our knowing it. It was too much. We had to get away into some place where we could be alone, and recover ourselves as best we could before we were able to fall in with the ways of our new life. We are at present 'at home in the body.' We have not yet learned, by losing it, what the body is to us. The various activities of the soul are sorted out and appropriated by the several senses of the body, so that the soul's action from moment to moment is made easy, we may well conceive, by being thus distributed. What will it be to compress all that the senses have achieved separately into a single action—to see, but without these eyes—to hear, but without these ears—to experience some purely supersensuous feeling that shall answer to the grosser senses of taste and smell; and then to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, by one single movement of the spirit, combining all these separate modes of apprehension into a single act? What will it be to find ourselves with the old self—divested of that body which has clothed it since its first moment of existence—able to achieve, it may be so much—it may be so little; living on, but under conditions which are so entirely new? This experience alone will add no little to our existing knowledge, and the addition will have been made during the first five minutes after death.

II. And the entrance on the next world must bring with it a

knowledge of God such as is quite impossible in this life. In this life many men talk of God, and some men think much and deeply about Him, and some fewer still hold much communion with Him; but here men do not attain to that sort of direct knowledge of God which the Bible calls sight. We do not see a human soul. A human soul makes itself felt in conduct, in conversation, in the lines of the countenance, though these often enough mislead us—in the expression of the eye, which misleads us less often; that is to say, that we know that the soul is there, and we detect something of its character and power and drift, but we do not see it. In the same way we feel God behind nature, whether in its awe or in its beauty—behind human history, whether in its justice or in its weird mysteriousness—behind the life of a good man, or the circumstances of a generous and noble act. Most of all, we feel Him near when conscience—conscience, His inward messenger—speaks plainly and decisively to us. Conscience, that invisible prophet, appeals to and implies a law; and a law cannot but mean a legislator. But even then we do not see Him. 'No man hath seen God at any time.' Even the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father is said only to have declared Him, since in Him the Godhead was veiled from earthly sight by the mantle of flesh and blood which, together with a human soul, He assumed in time. But certainly great servants of God have been said to see Him even in this life. Thus Job, 'I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth Thee;' thus David, 'As for me, I shall behold Thy presence in righteousness.' Thus Isaiah beheld while the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Thus S. John, when he saw the risen Saviour in His glory, fell at His feet as dead. The first sight of the earthly Jerusalem has been to more than one traveller a perfectly new sensation in the life of thought and feeling. What must not be the first direct sight of God—of God, the source of all beauty, of all wisdom, of all power—when the eye opens upon Him after death? 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty'—they were words of warning as well as words of promise. What will it not be to see Him in those first few moments—God, the eternal love, God, the consuming fire—as we shall see Him in the first five minutes after death?

III. At our entrance on another world we shall know ourselves as never before. The past will be spread out before us, and we shall take a comprehensive survey of it. Each man's life will lie out before him as a river, which he traces from its source in a distant mountain till it mingles at last with the ocean. The course of that river lies sometimes through dark forests which hide it from view,—sometimes through sands or marshes, in which it seems to lose itself. Here it forces a passage angrily between precipitous rocks; here it glides

gently through meadows which it makes green and fertile. At one while it might seem to be turning backwards, as if out of pure caprice,—at another, to be parting, like some gay spendthrift, with half its volume of waters; while later on it receives some contributory stream that restores its strength; and so it passes on till the ebb and flow of the tides upon its bank tells that the end is near.

What will not the retrospect be when, after death, for the first time, we survey, as with a bird's-eye view, the whole long range, the strange vicissitudes, the loss and gain (as we deem it), the failures, and the triumphs of this earthly existence—when we measure it in its completeness, when it is at last over, as never before?—for this indeed is the characteristic of the survey after death—that it will be complete.

It may help us to think, from time to time, of what will be our condition in the first five minutes after death. Like death itself, the solemnities which follow it must come to all of us. We know not when or where or how we individually shall enter on it. This only we know—that come it must. That first five minutes—that first awakening to a new existence, with its infinite possibilities—will only be tolerable if we have indeed, with the hands of faith and love, laid hold on the hope set before us in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, who for us men and for our salvation took flesh and was crucified, and rose from death, and ascended into heaven, and has pleaded, and is pleading now, at the right hand of the Father for us, the weak and erring children of the fall. Without him, a knowledge of that new world—of its infinite and awful Master—still more of ourselves, as, without any disguise, we really are—will indeed be terrifying. With him we may humbly trust that even this weight of knowledge will be more than bearable if he, the Eternal God, is indeed our refuge, and beneath us are the everlasting arms.

H. P. LIDDON.

## Faith.

*Faith, hope, charity, these three.* 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.
*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* HEBREWS xi. 1.

FAITH is a word of which the New Testament is full. It was for ever on our Saviour's lips. 'Thy faith hath saved thee;' 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed;' 'Have faith in God.' It is echoed by every apostolic writer, from S. Paul's 'The just shall live by his faith,' to S. John's 'This is the victory that overcometh the

world, even our faith.' It is a word which passes, which has passed even within the New Testament, into theological and philosophical language, and which acquires various associations and shadows of meaning; yet there is a common and simple groundwork to all of them. When we are speaking of it as an excellence of the soul we do well to go back to its simplest form and try to see what it is in essence. The place in which, in this simplest form, it is most fully described to us is Hebrews xi. In speaking of it, then, let us follow the guidance of that great chapter. Faith is here opposed to sight. It is, in the first place, the resting of the soul upon the unseen. This, the writer says, has been the common feature of all great, heroic, saintly deeds and lives. The patriots of the ancient world, the philanthropists, the discoverers, Columbus pressing on with his mutinous crew through the boundless shoals of seaweed to the possible shore which no European eye had ever seen—all who have spent their lives for beauty which haunted their dreams, for the benefit of ages which they could never see; all who have hoped against hope, who have made good possible to others by believing and acting as if it was possible, these all in their measure have been added to the noble unfinished catalogue of 'Gedeon and Barak, of Jepthae and David and the prophets.'

Such, then, is faith in this simplest sense. It is first the resting of the soul on the unseen—the power—the beautiful gift and grace of God, the prerogative of all noble races and high souls, yet the power also to be won, to be improved, to be lost—of trusting beyond the limits of sight and proof, of trusting to hopes, to imagination, to the vision of truth and beauty. And, secondly, it is the turning of this faculty upon its true object, upon Him in whom that unseen world of truth and beauty has its being. It is the resting of the soul upon God. The faith of a Christian is the resting of the soul upon God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ.

Let us think of it a little in both these aspects.

And first the faculty, the power, apart from its supreme object. In a sense we all must recognise what a large part it plays in life. Almost every act is, and must be in a way, an act of faith. When we work for a more or less distant end; when we trust to the word of another; when we act upon our belief as to the powers and laws of nature—in each case we venture beyond what our senses can assure or even our reason can prove.

To a soul in which this faculty is alive, which can so look on the unseen and reach out towards it, comes the wonderful revelation. That dream-world is the true, the real world. All those visions of beauty—truth and love and justice—are not phantoms of our brains, but the outlines, dimly seen, of One infinitely perfect, by whom and

in whom are we and all things. Faith in goodness becomes faith in God, and faith in God opens men's cares and heart to take in God's revelation of Himself. All faith in goodness—all willingness to forego pleasure, to endure, for the sake of a beautiful vision of right and truth—is, in a sense, faith in God. It is a necessary qualification to our receiving the better revelation. Though Jesus Christ came upon earth and lived before the eyes of men a divine life in power and perfect goodness, yet the majority of those who saw Him did not receive Him. Why they did not is written in the gospel story; and is written, alas, also in our own hearts. They had not faith as a grain of mustard seed. The beauty of His life was not a beauty which they had eyes to see.

DEAN WICKHAM.

## The Praise of Love.

*But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*
1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.

THE contrast between the two panegyrists of love is striking and suggestive. Each speaks out of the depth of his own consciousness, each with an eloquence not easy to be surpassed: but with S. John love is an ideal atmosphere, in which the soul, absorbed in satisfied acquiescence and adherence, delights in God because He is God, and because His commandments are good. With S. Paul, it is a constraining force; it is as though, amid the discords of earth, he heard clear, though far off, the perfect harmony of heaven, and was carried captive, body, soul, and spirit, by the heart-subjugating music.

And surely the fact that men cast by nature in such opposite moulds should be found united in their testimony to the supreme virtue, not merely supplies a forcible illustration of the words of the loved disciple, 'Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us,' but points likewise to the divine source of the power which could so dominate the intellect and absorb the heart.

I. The occasion which called forth S. Paul's impassioned eulogy was special and transitory. His favourite Church was at strife. During his eighteen months' residence among them the spirit of jealousy had slumbered; but now that he has removed to Ephesus, it has burst into such fierce flame that his moderating hand is needed to quench it, and the climax and turning-point of this, the foremost of all his epistles for sublimity of thought and eloquence of language, is to be found in his description of love, a pure and perfect gem, which 'on the stretched forefinger of all time' can never cease to sparkle.

# OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

The first thing that must strike every mind, apart from the exceeding beauty of the description, is the many-sidedness of the quality portrayed. It is not one virtue, such as that to which in common speech we have limited the name of charity, but all virtues in one that the Apostle is here describing. And this idea is still further borne out by what he says in his epistle to the Romans, of this same grace of love, that it is in brief 'the fulfilling of the law,' 'the one thing lacking,' even when all the commandments have been kept in the letter, the secret talisman in virtue of which the old law is transferred from the tables of stone and writ new upon 'the fleshy tables of the heart.' Or, as he designates it later in his Colossian Epistle, 'the bond of perfectness,' which holds together and harmonises all the manifold traits of the Christian character. Nor is S. Paul alone in this comprehensive way of speaking. S. James, the least emotional of New Testament writers, uses a remarkable epithet in rebuking the hollow practice of the Christian society of Palestine. He calls it the 'royal law,' the law which is the king of all laws, to love one's neighbour as one's self. If S. Paul had never written a line, we should still have no doubt that love is the one thing needful, but it is to his large intellect and still larger heart that we are indebted for that marvellous compendium of its characteristics which, next to the perfect example of Jesus Christ Himself, is perhaps the most helpful of all helps to Christian life. We do lack patience, or gentleness, or disinterestedness, or humility, or simplicity, or sincerity, or unselfishness, or good-temper? He has shown us that these graces are all traceable to a single origin, and if we would 'grow in grace' we must grow in love—that inward principle from which all virtues spring as naturally as flowers from a healthy root.

II. But the many-sidedness of love is not the only ground of its supremacy. S. Paul next draws attention to its permanence. 'Love never faileth,' and in this respect he again contrasts it with those spiritual gifts which first occasioned the mention of it. The Apostle had no disposition to depreciate these mysterious powers. When occasion required, he was not slow to claim them for himself. But he was too clear-sighted to value them beyond a certain point, 'I thank my God,' he says in the next chapter, 'that I speak with tongues more than ye all.' No inclination there to despise his gift. 'Yet,' he adds, 'I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.'

There never was a man who entertained a juster view of his own powers than S. Paul. He had nothing of mock modesty about him; but on the other hand, his pride was so completely subordinated to his charity, that he seems to have been almost unable to prize his

gifts except as means to an end, and that end, the good of others. And time has confirmed his estimate of the value of gifts as compared with the knowledge of love. The tongues—what are they to-day, but the subject of curious speculation? And knowledge—where would be the science of S. Paul's time now as compared with the knowledge of a simple child? Even the shape and motion of the world in which we live were a sealed book to him. The wisdom of our own forefathers, where is it? And in a few years our knowledge shall be even as theirs. But it was not human science which the Apostle had especially in view. Prophecy, or as we might now call it, the faculty of criticism as applied to Scripture, which he placed first among the Spirit's gifts, prophecy too he foresaw must fail. His eye reached back into the past, and forward into the future. He saw that there had been and that there would still be a progress in revealed knowledge, and even for the abundance of the revelation, vouchsafed to himself, save the simple revelation of God's love in Christ he would venture to claim no permanence.

III. Love is not only above all gifts; it is many-sided while they are single; it is permanent while they are fleeting, but it is chief also among the graces which abide, because while they are in their very nature incomplete, it is already stamped with the mark of perfection.

The Apostle introduces this thought by the use of two familiar figures. 'When I was a child,' he says, 'I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child, but now that I am become a man I have put away childish things.' Never are we so much a riddle to ourselves as when some chance circumstance has happened to call up before the mind the thoughts and feelings of a vanished time. Have we not found ourselves saying at such moments, 'Strange that I should have believed this or felt that'? As life goes on we are ever thus waking up, as it were, and wondering at what seem to us like dreams in the light of greater knowledge and increased experience. And so it will be, S. Paul hints, in the future. What the lispings and caprices of infancy are to our childhood, what the thoughts and feelings of childhood are to our middle age, that, or something akin to that, will the experience of full-grown manhood be to the perfect state to which we look forward.

Or to follow the thoughts suggested by his other figure. 'Now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face.' The only idea, he means to say, which we can form here of that spiritual world where love shall be all in all is like the imperfect image which a metal or stone surface gives of the object set against it. We see things not as they really are, but confusedly, imperfectly, through or by means of an intermediate object. If such then be the incompleteness of our

present knowledge, that in comparison of that which shall be, it is but as the whimsical day-dream of a child, or the blurred outline cast by some fair landscape upon a reflecting surface, can we have any certainty that what we now conceive of God will then be verified, that when Christ shall appear, and we shall see Him as He is, we shall not find Him different from that which He has been pictured to us? In a word, is there not room for apprehension that our Christianity may prove after all to have been a mistake? Assuredly not, if we believe what S. Paul says of love. Knowledge may pass away, or rather the ignorance which fancied itself knowledge. Truth may change, or rather the opinions which passed for truth; but the blessed three, Faith, Hope, and Love shall abide; Faith the evidence, Hope the earnest, Love the very foretaste of heaven. There is no putting of these away as childhood passes into manhood. They were born with our birth, they will follow us to the grave. They are, whether we will or no, the links which bind us to the invisible.

And of these love is the greatest, greater than faith, which is trust in God, greater than hope, which is desire after Him. It is the source of them both. It is God's own likeness already revealed in our hearts. Doubtless in this our present state, love is very far from perfect—God knows how weak it is, how partial, how selfish—but in so far as it is love, I say, it has upon it the stamp of perfection. It is the grace which brought Christ down to earth. It is the grace, the only grace that raises man to heaven. E. M. YOUNG.

## III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

### Vague Prayers.

*What wilt thou that I shall do for thee?* S. Luke xviii. 41.

THE gospel for this day serves the important purpose of reasoning with us as to the loss and danger of vagueness and unreality in prayer.

It is true, there is such a thing as what we may well call simple communing with God; that mere interchange (with reverence be it spoken) of thought and feeling with God through His Son Jesus Christ, without any special request or petition, which is one of the chief privileges and chief blessings of the Christian life below. But in such intercourse there would be little difficulty in replying to the question of the text. 'Lord, that I may be with

Thee; Lord, that I may grow in grace; Lord, that I may practise for heaven; Lord, that I may know Thee better and love Thee more;' such an answer as this would have in it nothing of that vagueness, nothing of that unreality, which the text, in its spiritual application, is sent to reprove.

It is not of such communing with God that we would speak in terms of disparagement. But we have all known something of a vagueness and unreality in prayer, the very reverse and opposite of this.

I. Here, for example, and in private also, we are wont to begin our devotions with an act of confession.

Let us practise ourselves in meaning something by our confessions of sin. If here, in God's House, we must be contented with summaries of our condition; with calling ourselves miserable sinners, in whom there is neither health nor hope; let us take heed that we prepare for such confessions by diligent self-examination at home. We have no right to use these words in Church—true as they are, and (when rightly understood) comforting as they are—unless we do know something against ourselves, which, in our secret prayers at all events, we confess particularly. Let us habituate ourselves to a distinct and definite review of sins that are past. In the evening let us consider with ourselves what we have said, what we have done, wrong, on the day that is ending; what we have left unsaid and left undone which ought to have been either done by us or spoken. And indeed we shall find enough, every one of us, to make us ashamed and to make us sorrowful.

The confession of sin, and its natural accompaniment, the prayer for forgiveness, is one part, the earliest and a most indispensable part, of all worship. It has respect to the time past; to that irretrievable, that ineffaceable past, which is the millstone round the neck of all of us. God be praised for that unspeakable gift of an atonement and propitiation for sin, which enables us still to endure under a load so burdensome and so oppressive! May He give us grace to lay hold upon the hope thus set before us, and so to use the promise of pardon as that it may indeed sprinkle our hearts from an evil conscience!

II. But the other part of all prayer has respect rather to the future. 'That we may obtain mercy;' that is one thing: 'and find grace to help in time of need;' that is the other. With regard to this latter, even more than with regard to the former, there is a risk of vagueness, of unreality, in our prayers. The petitions which we seem to bring with us to the throne of grace may be neutralised by our inability to answer the searching inquiry of our Lord, 'What wilt thou that I shall do for thee?'

When Christ asks, 'What wilt thou that I shall do for thee?' no

answer could be so suitable as that of the blind man himself, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight. 'What I need is, not so much deliverance from a particular kind or form of sin, but rather the power to apprehend those great realities of heaven and of eternity, of God, and Christ and the soul, in which alone consists the permanence and perpetuity of human existence. And when in preparation for worship I am thinking over what special want and distress I shall bring most prominently to the Lord for healing, I can think of nothing so appropriate as this which seems to be of all the most general; an increase of that vital gift of faith by which alone I can either see Christ or live to God. The Apostles themselves said once unto the Lord, 'Lord, increase our faith.'

Let us all bring something, whatever it be—something real, something definite, something learned by experience and examination—whenever we profess to approach God's mercy-seat with the prayer for healing, help, or grace. The very endeavour to do this will give point and meaning to our worship. If we all come hither, week by week, with a known and felt want to be satisfied out of Christ's fulness, there will be a force and an energy and a concentration in our worship, which is commonly too much lacking. Then will the question of the text sound in our ears with less of reproof than encouragement; and when the Saviour asks, as the preliminary to healing, 'What wilt thou that I shall do for thee?' we shall be ready, all of us, with definite response, 'Lord, that mine eyes may be opened! Lord, that I may receive my sight!'

DEAN VAUGHAN.

## IV OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

### Thou shalt be a Blessing.

*And thou shalt be a blessing.* GENESIS xii. 2.

HEN God, in the freeness of His electing love, called Abraham, and, in Abraham, the Jewish nation, to Himself, He perfectly cradled them in blessings: 'I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.'

This is the way God begins with a man. If ever, to man or nation, He afterwards speaks otherwise, it is because they have made Him.

And if I knew nothing but that God thus spoke to Abraham, and

his seed, nearly four thousand years ago, I should be quite sure that the end of the Jews would be that they should be very happy!

The intermediate events may be what they may: it is in the extremes—in the beginnings and endings of things—that God indicates his faithfulness.

To such a mind as Abraham's, a mind which was always going forth to others—to Lot, to the cities of the plain, to Melchizedek, to the sons of Heth—the blessing would have been incomplete if it had stopped with 'I will bless thee.' It needed just that which followed, 'And thou shalt be a blessing.'

And indeed it is not too much to say, that, in the building up of the believer, this is the capital, to which that is only the shaft.

To every Christian heart, life, however furnished it may be would want its beauty and its point, if that climax were not there, 'And thou shalt be a blessing.'

And here I cannot help saying that I think the error of many of us is this, that we account religion rather as a possession to be held, or a privilege to be enjoyed, than as a life which we are to spread, and a kingdom that we are bound to extend.

And consequently, the religion of many men is grown too passive It would be much healthier and much happier if there were cast into it more action.

How the promise was fulfilled to Abraham, in his own person, and in his race, it will not need many words now to tell.

He himself, wherever he went, not by his prayers only, and by his influence, but by the actual charm and power of his presence, shed blessings about him—just as Jacob did at Padan-aram, and Joseph did in Egypt.

He carried with him, as every good man does, an atmosphere of blessing. Relatives are remembered for his sake; and kings acknowledge themselves his debtors.

Generations might trace their deliverances and their mercies to their forefather, for God remembered Abraham, and blessed his descendants for the patriarch's sake.

But if in Abraham to the Jews, still more in the Jews to the world.

They were that sanctuary of truth set up among the nations, which kept alive the light which still survived upon the earth.

To their care were committed the oracles; and faithfully and nobly they fulfilled the trust.

What would be our condition now, had they been less careful guardians of the sacred deposit?

Who shall calculate what the Church owes to the Jewish authors, who wrote those works which have been, and shall be, to the end of time, the deepest mines of wisdom, of strength, of comfort, and

peace; from which, in all their chequered histories, the child of God goes to draw all his real sufficiency?

And who shall say, how much that is true in blessing, and noble in sentiment, even in the old Pagan world, owes itself directly to those pure Jewish fountains of the mind and heart?

And never, in the history of the world, has there been a king or a people, which has done good to the Jews but God has marked out that king and that people for a blessing.

Why did Cyrus establish so great a kingdom? Why did Alexander the Great conquer well-nigh the world? They were kind to the Jews. Even in their captivity, Babylon might well call its prisoners benefactors.

And then came the climax. He, who so blesses with His blood: He, who did nothing but bless: He, without whom nothing is blessed indeed: He, whom every joy in every world acknowledges as its only source—He was 'the seed of Abraham.'

Himself a Jew, He committed His powers, His work, His glory, to Jews. To Jewish missionaries we owe the gospel. Jews laid the foundation of our Church. At Jewish hands the cup of blessing was given to the Gentiles. And at this moment, even in their degradation, they are a blessing. They stand the living, the tangible, the strongest evidence in the whole world to God's truth; an evidence which every man may read, and no man can gainsay.

Themselves the witnesses to the very truth which they do not hold; and which themselves once endeavoured to destroy.

And who shall say what will be presently—when, the real shechinah restored, there shall go forth such a light and such a glory from Jerusalem, that from thence, as from the centre of all that is holy and true, the range shall fill the circle of the universe? and all of us awakening, as we shall do, as life from the dead; we shall admire, and reverence and emulate the children of Abraham; and account them the beauty of the Lord, and the authors of our peace and joy!

Spoke not God then very truth, when He said, 'Thou shalt be a blessing'?

I believe that there are many of you (would that I could say all!) to whom a greater happiness could not be proposed than the idea that God had said, individually and specially, to you, 'Thou—*thou*—shalt be a blessing.'

Oh! how would the monotony and the dreariness of an unsatisfied existence be changed in a moment into energy and delight, if the thought were indeed impressed upon some of your minds, 'I am to be a blessing! To whom, I know not. And how, I know not—but I am to be a blessing! Perhaps in my own family. Perhaps to some soul out of it. Perhaps to many. I do not care. Oh! I

know I am not to live in vain. I am placed in this world for a great purpose—I am to be a blessing!'

I cannot conceive a deeper well-spring of power and joy to any man than such a feeling as that!

But can it be—is it possible that, at this instant, those words were really said to you? May the text in its legitimate signification point to you? Let us see.

The promise was made to 'Abraham, and to his seed.' And S. Paul has taught us to interpret that word, 'his seed,' as meaning primarily, Christ.

But every believer—even the least—is in Christ. Christ's seed is in him; as Abraham's seed was in Christ.

So his union with Christ makes him at once of the genealogy of the stock of Abraham. He is, spiritually and truly, Abraham's seed; and, as such, and only as such, he comes into any one of the promises of God—for all the promises of God are to 'Abraham, and to his seed.' Unless you are Abraham's seed, you cannot have one.

But, as joined to the mystical body of Christ, you are Abraham's seed; and you stand in the entail; and one of the promises to which you are admitted, and which is yours, therefore, is this: 'Thou shalt be a blessing.'

It belongs to every real Christian. Believe it. Take it to your heart. Let it be an element of your life. God has said it: 'Thou shalt be a blessing.'

To give effect to this blessing, the first requisite is, that you have a distinct conviction in your own mind, that you have received a mission—to do something for God.

The more absolute your own inward impression and assurance is, that you have received a particular vocation, and that that vocation is from God, to effect a great purpose, to make some one really and eternally happier—to influence a mind—to save a soul—the more likely you are, in God's grace, to do it.

For the sense of a positive appointment, and, if I may so speak, a destiny to do a thing, is the most powerful motive of which the human mind is capable.

Take it, then, for it is true; take it, as a separate message from God to your soul, to-day; and spoken, in the still accents of the spirit, to the inner chamber of your conscience—'Thou shalt be a blessing.' For that end thou wast made.

Do not say others shall be; but thou. Do not read may be, but shall be. 'Thou shalt be a blessing.'

And go in the confidence that it is an actual prophecy, which has been spoken over you; and that you shall, and must, and cannot help to fulfil it. 'Thou shalt be a blessing.'

From that hour you will feel an unconceived repose. If you go anywhere, you will take the promise along with you: 'Thou shalt be a blessing.' If you are sitting down with your family, it will be there, at the table: 'Thou shalt be a blessing.' If you are sick, and confined to your room, still the promise rules in the sick-room: 'Thou shalt be a blessing.' If suffering—lonely, despised, depressed—still nothing can cancel the words ('He has said it, and shall He not do it?'): 'Thou shalt be a blessing.' And before the very act and article of death, 'Thou shalt be a blessing.'

And remember, that whoever would be 'a blessing,' must always be thinking more of what he is to receive than what he is to impart. It is the filling of the vessel, and not the pouring out of it, which is the most important part. The water is sure to run, if the vessel is full enough. Therefore it stands first, 'I will bless thee;' and then, 'Thou shalt be a blessing.'

Therefore, whoever would be 'a blessing' must be, as Abraham was, a man of faith, and a man of great prayer. He must live close to God, and separate from the world. He must grapple with God in earnest communion every day. He must go up much to the fountains of things. He must not be contented without taking in the mind of God. He must be a man whose converse is always of the unseen, the eternal, and the real.

And there is no blessing in anything which is not loving. Loving humility, loving intercession, loving faithfulness, loving labours, loving controversies, loving patience, loving self-denial, loving judgments of every man, loving looks, loving hands, loving thoughts. It is love that does the work.

Therefore go about lovingly. Feeling, 'Oh! how has God loved me; that He ever thought of me! that He ever chose me! that He ever used me! How, at this moment, God is loving that soul to which I am speaking. O God, make me love like Thee! Steep me in love!'

If thus you go along the path of life, the words will go to you, 'Thou shalt be a blessing.' J. VAUGHAN.

## Travelling to Canaan.

*They went forth to go into the land of Canaan: and into the land of Canaan they came.* GENESIS xii. 5.

THIS is to my mind one of the most comforting verses in the whole Bible. So simple, and so sure! It seems to say: 'If you will only set out to go to heaven, you will get there. The end

is certain, if the beginning is right. It only wants really to set your face Zionwards, and to start, and be in earnest, and you must succeed.' 'They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.'

But is it really so? Are we as sure to go to heaven if we begin and try as Abraham and Sarah and Lot were to arrive at Canaan, when once they began their journey? Is it so certain? Are there no great dangers on the way? Do none turn back? Are there not any who commence well, and end badly? Are all, who once seek their salvation, finally saved?

These are important questions. Let us examine them. We have much to aid us.

I. The text is written (if I may so say) from heaven's side of the question. It is the history—put in short—of all the saints who ever went to glory. They left the world—the land of their birth. They took a long journey; and at last they got home quite safe. The rest, how it was, why it was, the rest is all God.

Why they ever set out while others stayed behind, how they were led, by what means they persevered and conquered, what battles they fought, what victories they won, how they came in at last, all that makes up the interval, that is all grace, grace. Grace fills in the story. All we know is, 'they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.'

But there were difficulties by the way; why are we not told of the difficulties? Did you ever when you were on a journey reach the top of a high hill, and look back upon the way by which you have been travelling? You had crossed many valleys and mountain steeps. There had been very awkward and disagreeable places. The ground was by no means even. And at some spots you had been frightened and very tired. You had almost given up; you had very serious hindrances; and at seasons you grew faint. But on the top of that hill you could not see these things. The whole way looked level and quite easy. You were too high now to be troubled about hard places and unpleasant things. Those little distinctions were lost. It was enough—you had reached the top. And things that were great at the time—high spots and low spots—the climbings, the fallings,—were so small from that height, that you could not, or you did not, care to see them. So it will be when you get to heaven. All these things will look so very little!

'They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.'

II. But what is it really to set out?

It is not to sit with folded hands—in dreamy hours—and think about it, and plan it, and say: 'I wish I was a Christian: I wonder

if I ever shall be a Christian. I am not; but I mean to be. I will begin soon.' That is not setting out.

It is not to sit by the dying bed of some one we loved and admired, and say, 'Oh, let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his!' That is not setting out.

1. But what is it? Abraham had a call to his journey. So have you. Many, many. Perhaps you can remember some; more you have forgotten. Sometimes, they came close, and thick together: sometimes at intervals; sometimes, from without; sometimes, from within. A little child's simple thought about heaven, a Sunday school lesson, a sermon, a sorrow, a friendly urging, a falling into sin, a weary sense of what a poor thing your life was, a voice as if God spoke in your ear, something which said, as plain as God spoke to Abraham: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.'

It is a great thing to recognise a call.

With the call, there came grace to obey it. There always does. The grace would be enough to break all ties, and meet all obstacles, if only you use it, and be faithful to it.

2. And from the moment of that call, and the grace accompanying the call, Abraham had one great single object in view. It was Canaan. And the strength of his aim carried him through all difficulties.

The great secret of life is to have a strong aim. Some persons live an aimless life. They are weak, restless characters. They live to very little purpose.

Have an aim, a worthy aim, a high aim. Usefulness, self-improvement, your own soul, another's soul, the glory of God, Christ, heaven. Then, as you go along, you will feel, 'I am going to heaven. What does all this matter? What trumpery it is! I am only on a journey. I shall soon be home. And how will all these things look then?' A thousand things will tempt you to stay on the road; but you will say to them all: 'I am doing a great work; I cannot come down. I must be on my road.'

3. And Abraham walked with the promises. God had said, 'I will bring thee to the land, and I will bless thee.' And has not God said it more to you? For since that time He hath said it, Christ is saying it, and it is a totally different thing when you feel, 'I have a promise underneath me. Promises must prevail. And the promise carries me. I travel on the wings of the promises. And I go so right. I travel on the wings of the promises.'

4. And he had more than promise. He had a Presence. And every one who is in the path of duty has a presence, a presence everywhere. It is the presence of Jesus. A brother at your side.

And it makes such sweet company! And it is so real! It speaks to you, and you speak to it. And it is 'the light of life.'

Never doubt, never grieve, never lose that presence. And it will be all right. You will journey happily all the way. And as you go on, and get nearer the gates, the angels will be looking out for you, and they will say, 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?'

III. Do I then say that every one who sets out compasses his aim at last, and takes the kingdom?

It depends on how they do it. Is it God who begins, or you? Is Jesus in His right place in this matter? And are you in your right place? Is He very high, and you very low?

This I say, that every one who sets out in real earnest and continues in earnest—humble enough, and prayerful enough, gets to heaven. I do not believe it possible—I do not believe it compatible with the character of God, that any should ever fail who are in real earnest about their souls. I do not believe—since the creation of the world—there is an instance of a person in real earnest about his soul, who failed in getting to heaven. Else, what does that mean: 'He that has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ'? Or that, 'Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'

There will be falls by the way—many and deep; and everything turns upon how a person does with a fall, whether he continues in his fall, or whether he gets up again; and how he gets up again. But the fall of a soul is not the death of a soul. And you can say confidently, 'Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise.'

You will often wander out of the path, especially when in 'the green pastures,' and walking 'beside the still waters.' Those are the wandering times.

But you will have cause very often to say with David, 'He restoreth my soul.'

And there will be dark times—black as night! But 'who is he that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.' And his light will break forth again as the day. And though 'the heaviness may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning.'

And great enemies will be there on the road. And you will be beset with robbers, that will take away all your peace. 'But greater is He that is for you than all that are against you.' And thousands of times you will sing: 'Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory.'

And there may be 'years' of this labour and conflict; but for 'the love you have' to Christ, and for the love Christ has to you, 'they will seem to you but a few days.' For, after all, it is a very little way to heaven. J. VAUGHAN.

## Temptation.

*And there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there.* GENESIS xii. 10.

I. MANY students of the life of Abram have believed that on this occasion Abram ought not to have gone down to Egypt at all, and have pointed out that in the record there is no intimation that he consulted God in the matter, or had any communication from heaven, such as he was wont to have at other important crises of the history. I cannot, however, at all assent to this conclusion, because as far as we can see there was no other alternative unless he had gone back to Mesopotamia, which would have been far worse. Abram had grasped the monotheistic idea; but his faith required to be strengthened and educated, and what better means could God have taken for doing so than this, to send him from one country to another, and make him in every country experience that he had not left his God behind him, but that Jehovah went with him, and was able, even in the territory supposed to belong to other deities, to aid and protect him? There may have been other educative reasons why he was sent down to Egypt. Egypt was not only—on account of the Nile, whose annual inundations covered its fields, and gave it wonderful fertility—the land to which to have resort in a time of famine, but it was a country of bold renown, of highly-developed civilisation, and to look upon the monuments of its antiquity and the manners and customs of its civilised peoples must have given a wonderful expansion to a mind which was predestined to be one of the great fountains of ideas for the race. Of course there were very great dangers of every kind in going down to Egypt, and it is on this account so many have concluded that his journey was not with God's consent. We read in S. James this morning that 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man;' and yet on this occasion He seems to have tempted Abram, and it is expressly said in Abram's biography at a later period, 'Then God did tempt Abram.' These statements seem to be in the flattest contradiction, yet I do not think it is very difficult to reconcile them. God never tempts any man in the sense of leading him into temptation that he may fall. That is the diabolical work of the Evil One, and

God never leads any man into temptation where escape is impossible. On the contrary, He has pledged Himself that there always will be a way of escape. But God often leads men into circumstances of temptation for the purpose of strengthening their character and invigorating their principles. We are not at liberty to enter into temptations of our own accord, but if our duty carries us into circumstances of temptation, we are entitled to conclude we have been led there not for our disadvantage, but for our good. One of the keenest observers of modern times has said:

> 'A talent ripens best when hid away from toil and strife,
> A character must grow amid the rush and roar of life.'

II. Abram was tempted on this occasion and he fell, and his fall was so disastrous that it is humiliating to read or speak about it. Is it possible, we ask, that one who had been in such close communication with God, and had before this sacrificed so much for his principles, could have fallen so low? It shows once more what a bundle of contradictions man is, what a curious combination of strength and weakness even at the best. He is like the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream—though he may have a head of gold, he has feet of clay. There were three sins, three black sins, combined in this fall of Abram. There was first cowardice. He was sinfully afraid of his own life, and he thrust his wife between him and danger. If any reliance is to be put upon the words of Pharaoh, this was wholly unnecessary; but perhaps religious men are too apt to doubt, to attribute evil to those who do not make the same profession as themselves, and to doubt especially the reality of natural virtue. Then, secondly, there was falsehood. From a statement of Abram, at a subsequent period of his biography, we learn that he did not lie affirmatively when he said that Sarah was his sister, because she was his half-sister; but he was lying negatively, because he at all events implied the denial that she was his wife; and this sin was all the blacker because we discover in that same passage that the two had agreed before they left Mesopotamia to practise this dissimulation if they should fall into such danger as they supposed now to be threatening them. Then, thirdly, and blackest of all, was the sin of indelicacy. It shows sadly what a hold all these three sins had on this good man, that, at a subsequent period of his career, he repeated his conduct upon this occasion; and it is a sad instance of the hereditary nature of sin, or, at all events, the danger of imitating base acts, that his weak and imitative son Isaac on one occasion repeated this sin of his father.

III. If on this occasion the patriarch had overcome his great temptation, and in spite of fear, preferred truth and honour to his

life, there can be no doubt that his God would have in some remarkable way signalised this great step in the upward progress of morality; but, when he failed, there was nothing left to God but to signalise the truth in the reverse way—by the humiliation of Abram.

I dare say in nearly all respects Abram was a far better man than Pharaoh. But even the best and greatest man is a very small and mean creature when he has been found out in some deed of shame, and that is one of the ways in which God chiefly punishes sin. We may have committed a sin which is our own secret, and our conscience may have ceased to trouble us about it, when suddenly, by the will of Providence, it becomes known to others, and then the force of public opinion is brought to bear upon us, and in the mirror of the conscience of our fellow-men we see what mean and guilty creatures we are. We are dealing with a stage of morality that is at a great distance behind us, and merely to avoid a sin like this is no more creditable to us than it is creditable to a schoolboy to know that the earth moves round the sun, though Plato did not know that. This is a sin belonging to a stage of morality that the race has naturally passed. Yes; but what were its ingredients as we saw?—cowardice, falsehood, indelicacy. Are these altogether things of the past? Have we no need to fear them? And when we see how the character of a great saint was undermined with them till, in a great moment in his life, it collapsed, do we not discern in such an incident a divine warning to us to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation? Do we not hear the divine voice say to us, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall'?

J. STALKER.

## V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

### Growing in Love.

1 Corinthians xiii.

THERE is an old wild ballad that tells us how a knight found, coiling round a tree in a dismal forest, a loathly dragon breathing out poison; and how, undeterred by its hideousness and foulness, he cast his arms round it and kissed it on the mouth. Three times he did it undisgusted, and at the third the shape changed into a fair lady, and he won his bride. Christ 'kisses with the kisses of His mouth' His enemies, and makes them His friends because He loves them. 'If

He had never died for His enemies,' says one of the old Fathers, 'He would never have possessed His friends.' And so He teaches us, in what seems to be this restriction of the purpose of His death and the sweep of His love, that the way by which we are to meet even alienation and hostility is by pouring upon it the treasures of an unselfish, self-sacrificing affection which will conquer at the last.

And so, if we want to know the blessedness and the sweetness of victory over these miserable, selfish hearts of ours, and to walk in the liberty of love, we can only get it by keeping close to Jesus Christ. In any circle, the nearer the points of the circumference are to the centre the closer they will necessarily be to one another. As we draw nearer, each for ourselves, to the Master, we shall feel that we have approximated to all those who stand round the same centre, and draw from it the same life. In the early spring, when the wheat is green and young, and scarcely appears above the ground, it springs in the lines in which it was sown, parted from one another and distinctly showing their separation and the furrows. But when the full corn in the ear waves on the autumn plain all the lines and separations have disappeared, and there is one unbroken tract of sunny fruitfulness. And so, when the life in Christ is low and feeble, His servants may be separated and drawn up in rigid lines of denominations and churches and sects; but, as they grow, the lines disappear. If to the churches of England to-day there came a sudden accession of knowledge of Christ, and of union with Him, the first thing that would go would be the wretched barriers that separate us from one another. For if we have the life of Christ in any mature measure in ourselves, we shall certainly have grown up above the fences behind which we began to grow, and shall be able to reach out to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and feel with thankfulness that we are one in Him.

A. MACLAREN.

## Charity.

*Let all your things be done with charity* (or, *Let all that you do be done in love*). *All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.* 1 Cor. xvi. 14, 20.

OUR Christian forefathers in the first age of the Church were a small body—generally drawn from the lower and middle classes—often persecuted, always perhaps suspected and despised. There was indeed reason enough for suspicion. They held necessarily aloof from much of the common life of cities, from the amusements and entertainments which were generally inextricably bound up with idolatrous rites and often with cruel and immoral practices,

from theatres and baths and public shows. Their nightly meetings, ending just before dawn, their talk of an absent King soon to return and destroy the kingdoms of the world, gave colour to charges of conspiracy and of disloyalty to the reigning Emperor. The very name of the feast of love, with which these meetings commenced, the kiss of peace, the familiar converse of Christian brethren and sisters, were perverted into a terrible accusation. The dark and mysterious sayings—overheard perhaps by slaves and half converts—about the sacrifice of the Son offered to his Father, and the feeding on the body and blood of this sacrifice, were twisted into calumnies of such murderous Thyestean banquets as were described in the most hideous of Grecian fables. Nor indeed were all assemblies and congregations of the early Church so entirely free from blame as to dissipate at once these charges, foul calumnies though they were. The freedom of the Christian spirit, the sudden escape from the trammels of the Jewish law on the one side, and from the heathen fear of death and of malignant evil powers or deities upon the other, often produced an effervescence of feeling, a perturbation of conduct, a licence even of behaviour, which gave some colour to some at least of these charges. That half of morality which consists of mere habit and deference to public opinion, and especially to the opinion of those of higher rank than ourselves, was naturally unsettled and drifted from side to side, as is shown in many passages of this letter.

But though the early Church was not free from evils of indiscipline, and had to learn by experience what the will of God was, there are abiding lessons for ourselves in the facts of early Church life.

I. The spirit of love and simplicity was carried into all the proceedings of the assembly. It is difficult to be certain as to the exact order in which the various actions were performed, nor is it likely that there was constant uniformity even in the same place. But it would seem probable that the feast called the Agape would follow closely on the conclusion of the business of the Church. It seems to have been held in daylight, and therefore not later than four or five o'clock in the afternoon. It was doubtless, like the Paschal Supper, from which it derived much of its character, interspersed with prayers and blessings, and with the reading of Scripture, as well as with the more joyous accompaniments of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and of familiar conversation especially on religious subjects.

With the entrance of the lights began probably the more solemn and sacred part of the work of the Christian assembly.

We have, happily, preserved to us one of the hymns of which Tertullian speaks, which in the age of S. Basil was of unknown authorship, and considered of primitive antiquity. 'Our fathers,' he writes, defending the divinity of the Holy Spirit, 'thought it not right to

receive the joyous gift of evening light in silence, but, directly it appeared, to give thanks. And though we cannot say who was the author of those words of the thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps, yet it is certainly a primitive utterance to which the people gives voice, and no one yet has ever thought them guilty of an impiety for saying—

'We hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit divine.'

This may be as early as the first or second century, and be one of the hymns in which 'Christ is adored as God,' of which Pliny and S. Hippolytus write from such opposite quarters.

If we are right in thinking that the lighting of the lamps was the prelude to the Eucharist, it is easy to see how, without anything forced or strained, they were recognised as symbolising the presence of Christ the light of the world. He had promised His presence wherever two or three were gathered together in His name. And so the spontaneous outburst of Christian piety recognised in the gift of light and in the suddenness of the change which it wrought, even in the simple array of lamps in the upper chamber, such as S. Paul had round him at Troas, something really akin to the gift of our Lord to a gloomy and darkened world. It saw in the transition something recalling the circumstances of His Nativity, when the true light that lighteth every man came into the world. Without anything artificial or superstitious this old hymn-writer or prophet—for the words are more akin to prophetic rhythm—recalled the primary truth that the God of Nature is the same as the God of Grace, and that He who said 'Let there be light' in the material heavens also sent His Son to repair the defects of natural light, and to give the joy of a new birth to men.

It was said by one of old, 'at eventide there shall be light,' and so it was actually at the birth of Christ. The sun had gone down on the hills of Bethlehem, but the glory of the Lord suddenly shone round about the shepherds, and they heard angel-voices proclaiming the new-born King, with a promise of peace on earth and good-will towards men.

If we consider all this together we may perhaps conjecture that the original position of the holy kiss, symbolical of Christian love and peace, and of the absence of all hatred and variance in the community, was coincident with the conclusion of the supper and with the lighting of the lamps, followed by the singing of this or some similar song of praise and adoration.

II. 'Let all that you do be done in love,' writes S. Paul to us as well as to the Corinthians.

There were, as we have seen, three spheres with which the early

Christian assemblies were specially concerned: (1) Church business; (2) social enjoyment; (3) worship. In all three we may infuse a spirit of love, that is to say, a willing recognition of the rights of all members of the Church. On the third I have already touched, and will not now add more. Let me conclude with a few words on the first and second.

In regard to Church business we have already made some considerable progress towards a restoration of the laity to their proper duties. They seem never to have included the definition of doctrine or the control of divine service, but they did embrace a much more active and personal participation in Christian work than has often been customary among us. The last twenty years have witnessed the establishment in nearly every diocese of a conference or representative synod of clergy and laity to attend to these duties. It is but a short period of trial, and we must not judge of their future usefulness simply by the past. But it is clear that they are altogether in the lines that S. Paul contemplated when he gave ordinances to the churches which he founded. The main difficulty before us is the application of similar principles to parochial life. Here public opinion is often weak, and a single ill-disposed person may hamper or destroy what should be the work of a united parish. The very lax ideas of schism that are prevalent amongst the less educated, the little personal jealousies, which prevent one moving unless another will do so; the readiness to take offence and to believe evil—these are no doubt the results of the absence in the past of training in Church business, but they are also very great obstacles to its restoration.

Life is short and the grains of frankincense (to use an ancient metaphor) are thrown upon the altar—now one, now another, but with very short intervals between them. We have but a little time wherein to greet the brethren and to show them affection for our Master's sake.

BISHOP WORDSWORTH.

## Abraham.

*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are of the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* GALATIANS iii. 7-9.

ABRAHAM'S life-story must have something in it that concerns Christians of every age to know. Three chief features strike me as prominent and characteristic—the way, namely, in which it illustrates—

# QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

1. What faith is.
2. What it is to walk by faith.
3. What it is, with the eye of such faith, to see Christ's day.

(1) It was evidently the faith of Abraham that so attracted and riveted the interest of S. Paul. To the Apostle of the Gentiles, the Hebrew pilgrim, dwelling even in the land of promise as in a strange country, is the great type of what it is to believe in God, to possess a faith which shall be counted for righteousness, not 'instead of righteousness' (as though it had been *ἀντὶ δικαιοσύνης*): but *εἰς δικαιοσύνην*, as that which constituted his righteousness (Romans iv. 5).

And so Abraham, to the eye of S. Paul, before and above any other saint in the annals of his race, is the representative of the nature of faith, not as opposed to reason—for faith must be rational, or it degenerates into fanaticism or credulity—but as opposed to sight. Faith, not so much a function or faculty of the intellect, as a posture or condition of the will: moral in its nature rather than intellectual: 'casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

Never, perhaps, was there a time in the history of the Church of Christ in which there was greater need to ascertain carefully what this typical faith of our father Abraham was. It was not the acceptance of a highly-developed, articulated creed. It was not the investiture of the act of worship with an elaborate ceremonial symbolism. It was not a fanatical conception of the media through which the spirit of man seeks, and finds, communion with the Spirit of God. The simple Bible record of it is, 'Abraham believed God;' and 'it was counted to him for righteousness,' because his whole life was the continued evidence for the reality of his faith. It was not perfect, but it was real. It rested on the simple verities—on the providence of God and His sovereignty, His rewarding those that diligently seek Him, the efficacy of prayer, the reasonableness and the comfort of worship—these, and little more than these truths and practices, made up Abraham's creed, his religion.

Some have thought that revelations were made to Abraham which would have enabled him to see as far into the purposes of God as did S. John or S. Paul; and particularly that after the averted sacrifice on Mount Moriah the whole mystery of Calvary was unrolled before his eyes—that this is the sense in which 'he saw Christ's day.' We will try to discover presently whether there may not be a more congruous interpretation of our Lord's word than this. Suffice it to say now that all this is mere assumption, foisted into the Scripture record, not only gratuitously, but utterly marring the proportions, and

structure, and development in the revelation of God's purposes to man. It is not only a vain invention ; it is an anachronism.

No ; the merit of Abraham's faith lay not so much in the breadth as in the intensity of its view ; not so much in its comprehensive grasp of the whole scheme of God, as in its deep persuasion of the duty of man. It was the faith of a saint rather than of a theologian. So was it also in the older and better days of Christendom. The faith that could remove mountains—and there was a grace even higher than that—was simply the intense energy of a soul throwing the whole force of its being upon the promises of God. The condition of the Saviour's putting forth His healing power was, 'Believe only and thou shalt be made whole.' When the Ethiopian eunuch asked his heaven-sent teacher, whether through the mystic instrument of the new birth he might enter into 'the better covenant' with God, Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest'; and he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' When S. Paul proclaims the word of faith which he preached, it is simply this: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' The gospel that he delivered to the Corinthians, wherein they stood, by which also they were saved, contained expressly only three grand articles: 'how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day' (1 Cor. xv. 1-4.)

(2) A consistent endeavour to frame the life so as to be in accordance with these convictions, so that what we are should be an expression to others of what we believe—avoiding the greatest of moral contradictions, the spiritual state which has the 'form of godliness' but is dead to its power—this is what the Apostle means by 'walking by faith and not by sight'; being 'saved by hope'; living with the eye fixed, not on the things which are 'seen and temporal,' but on the things which are 'unseen and eternal.'

The faith of Abraham is the sufficient account of all the moral phenomena of his character: of his unselfishness, his courage, his generosity, his placableness, his patience, his power of self-surrender. He seems never to have needed to sit down first and count the cost of what he was about to do. The divine instinct of his faith in God superseded the necessity of all such laborious calculations. To him, the Almighty God—the Lord who had provided and would still provide, the God who had listened to his intercessory prayer, and remembered him when He destroyed the cities of the plain and spared Lot for his sake, the Great Being with whom he had entered into covenant —was not a mere name, had not been petrified into a conventionalism, nor become a metaphysical abstraction. He was his God ; a constant

source of strength and energy; the God before whom he lived and who was with him in all that he did.

It was a faith almost evangelical in its nature. It stretched far beyond the horizon of this present world. It never looked back; it was always looking forward. His whole life declared plainly, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews testifies, that 'he sought not the country from which he came out,' to which he might have returned, but that 'he desired a better country—that is, a heavenly'; 'wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God, for he prepared for him a city.'

(3) Seeking God's blessing, not as his children were taught by Moses to seek it, in the fruit of his body, nor in the fruit of his cattle, nor in the fruit of his ground, but 'in the joy and peace of believing': in the precious gift of a 'conscience void of offence toward God and toward men'; realising the higher life of the Spirit, and leaving it to others to quarrel about pasture-lands and flocks and herds, do we find the evangelical temper of his faith. Not in any fancied anticipatory revelation of the great mystery of godliness, afterwards to be wrought out by Him who, when He came to deliver man, 'took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham'; but in this higher and more natural sense, I conceive that we are to understand that this great saint of God 'rejoiced to see the day of Christ, and saw it, and was glad.' He saw it, not at one particular place, nor at one particular time; not only on Mount Moriah, when 'in a figure' he had received his only-begotten son from the dead, but all his life through—wherever he pitched his tent, and built his altar, and waited patiently for the promise, and found himself strong from his trust in God.

For what is 'Christ's day' but that measure of knowledge of the will of God which it is our privilege to enjoy, and those opportunities of access to Him which all have, though all may not use? Even to us who live in the middle of that day, the light can be called neither clear nor dark. The knowledge is partial and fragmentary; the view is 'through a glass' and full of riddles (*ἐν αἰνίγματι*): the hopes, but not the eyes, enter into that which is within the veil. And just with less precise knowledge perhaps, but perhaps also with even so, intenser insight, fared Abraham. BISHOP FRASER.

# OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

## Modern Idolatry.

*'Covetousness, which is idolatry.'* COLOSSIANS iii. 5.

I. COVETOUSNESS is idolatry because it is a setting up of money in the place where God should reign. 'And it is the beginning of heresy,' as one very well says: 'It is so because it contains an implicit denial of the Incarnation, since covetousness does not recognise God in Humanity, but a god in money or property.'

Then covetousness is the parent of all that widespread and many-sided dishonesty which is a blot upon our national life. Dishonesty is found in our trade and commerce, in politics, on the Stock Exchange, in the professions, in our sports, in our churches and chapels. The landlord who grows rich on the rents of unsanitary dwellings; the 'sweater' who grinds the faces of the poor; the stockbroker who gambles away money that is not his; the merchant who looks upon his 'hands' as mere machines, and then takes the chair at a missionary meeting; the lawyer who takes fees for what he has not done; the parson who regards his parish as a means of livelihood, and nothing more; all these are guilty of covetousness, 'which is idolatry.'

We must pray and fight and watch against this terrible sin.

So long as we are not ashamed to indulge in mammon-worship—so long as we continue to set up a money-standard as the standard of merit and excellence—so long will covetousness continue to flourish. Is it not the fact that a man is courted very often only for the sake of his money-bags? 'You must know So-and-so. He is worth knowing—immensely rich!' 'Has he money?' is the question being asked on all sides. Not 'How did he get his money?' or 'How does he spend it?' but 'Has he got it?' When shall we be brave enough to recognise people for what they are, instead of what they have got—for what they are worth in character, and not what they are worth in £ s. d.?

II. If we can put our finger upon one cause, at least, of covetousness, is there any cure that we can suggest? Yes, I can tell you of a cure in one word—that golden word that stands prominently out as the great lesson of this Quinquagesima Sunday—Charity. There, I take it, is the cure for covetousness—Christian charity. The charity that forbids us to seek to 'get on' in the world, by getting others off—the love that bids us ever do as we would be done by—the charity that teaches us to look not on our own things, but on the things of others—the sweet Christian grace that teaches us (instead of seeking the hurt of others) to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fufil the law of Christ.'

J. B. C. MURPHY.

## VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

*Love.* 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

Love is the fruitful mother of bright children, as our great moralist poet learned when he painted her in the 'House of Holiness':

> 'A multitude of babes about her hung,
> Playing their sport that joyed her to behold.'

Our souls, by reason of sin, are 'like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh.' Love's master-hand laid upon them restores to them their part in 'fair music that all creatures make to their great Lord,' and brings us into such accord with God that

> 'We on earth, with undiscording voice,
> May rightly answer'

even the awful harmonies of His lips.

*Fervent Love.* 1 Cor. xiii.

We are afraid to be fervent; our true danger is icy torpor. We sit frost-bitten and almost dead among the snows, and all the while the gracious sunshine is pouring down, that is able to melt the white death that covers us, and to free us from the bonds that hold us prisoned in their benumbing clasp.

*Divine Human Love.* 1 Cor. xiii.

Our love is secondary—God's is primary; ours is reflection, His the original beam; ours is echo, His the mother-tone.

Heaven must bend to earth before earth can rise to heaven. The skies must open and drop down love, ere love can spring in the fruitful fields. And it is only when we look with true trust to that great unveiling of the heart of God which is in Jesus Christ, that our hearts are melted, and all their snows are dissolved into sweet waters, which, freed from their icy chains, can flow with music in their ripple, and fruitfulness along their course, through our otherwise silent and barren lives.

*Love to God.* 1 Cor. xiii.

Love to God is no idle emotion or lazy rapture, no vague sentiment, but the root of all practical goodness, of all strenuous efforts, of all virtue, and of all praise. That strong tide is meant to drive the busy wheels of life and to bear precious freightage on its bosom; not to flow away in profitless foam.

# ILLUSTRATIONS

*Love.* 1 Cor. xiii. 1. To Jesus all service done from the same motive is the same, and His measure of excellence is the quantity of love and spiritual force in our deeds, not the width of the area over which they spread. An estuary that grows wandering over miles of shallows may have less water in it, and may creep more languidly, than the torrent that thunders through some narrow gorge.

*Love to the Saviour.* The noblest use for the precious ointment of love which the poorest of us bears in the alabaster-box of the heart is to break it on Christ's head.

*Love of the brethren.* 1 Cor. xiii. 1. To separate ourselves from our brethren is to lose power. Half-dead brands heaped close will kindle one another, and flame will sparkle beneath the film of white ashes on their edges. Fling them apart, and they go out. Rake them together, and they glow. Let us try not to be little, feeble tapers, stuck in separate sockets, and each twinkling struggling rays over some inch or so of space; but draw near to our brethren, and be workers together with them, that there may rise a glorious flame from our summed and collective brightness which shall be a guide and hospitable call to many a wandering and weary spirit.

*Charity.* 1 Cor. xiii. 4. Remember the good old rabbi, who was awakened by one of his twelve sons saying, 'Behold! my eleven brothers lie sleeping, and I am the only one who wakens to praise and pray.' 'Son,' said the wise father, 'you had better be asleep too than wake to censure your brothers.' No fault can be as bad as the feeling which is quick to see and speak of other people's faults.

*The Heroism of Love.* 1 Cor. xiii. 4. 'Behold Christ Himself,' says Cyprian, 'in your captive brethren, and redeem from captivity Him who has redeemed us from death. Snatch from the hands of the barbarians Him who has snatched us from the grasp of the demon, and purchase with money the liberation of Him who purchased us with His blood.' To such appeals no Christians could continue insensible. The heroism of charity was sometimes carried so far that freemen offered themselves to serve instead of the captives. Such was the fervour of the love of the brethren; but charity must not confine itself within these limits, it must embrace all mankind, and seek the good of every fellow-creature. Thus when cruel epidemics ravaged Carthage and Alexandria, the Christians were ever foremost at the bedside of the dying, never asking whether those whom they thus tended had not been among their persecutors.

While terror reigned in the desolate villages, as their inhabitants were stricken down in multitudes, and the unburied dead were spreading death in the air, the proscribed Christians were the only helpers. 'If we show kindness only to our own,' said Cyprian to his brethren, 'we shall be no better than the pagans and the publicans. We, as Christians, are called to return good for evil, and to pray for those who persecute us. Since we are the children of God, let us be like Him in compassion.' The Christians of Alexandria showed themselves no less devoted during the plague which broke out in their city. Many of them paid with their life for the courage with which they braved the epidemic by the bedside of their worst enemies. When charity has reached this height of self-abnegation, so that it can rise above all private enmities and national distinctions, it is truly a reflection of the divine and perfect love. It embraces in its pity all who are embraced by the infinite compassion, and it is truly human, because truly divine. The old selfish, exclusive principle is utterly subdued. When Cyprian contrasted the parsimony of the Church with the largesses of the world to its prince, who had shed no blood for his subjects, nor won heaven for them, he used a rhetorical licence to move the Christians to greater liberality; but he knew that the so-called sacrifices of the pagan world were made to its own evil passions, and cost it very little, and he could not deny that in that city of Carthage, where his noble example had been so eagerly followed, charity had appeared as a heavenly vision upon an accursed earth.

*The Strength of Love.*

1 Cor. xiii. 4.

The love of God, like a bridge, spans the gulf of time. It has held up under the heaviest pressure. At different times, such has been the weight of human sins, that the best of men have feared the bridge would give way beneath the burden. But it has borne all things; and 'suffered long' even until now. In the time of Noah, the Bridge of Love suffered such depression under the weight of the world's iniquity, that for a brief season it disappeared beneath the flood, and still it stood unbroken in the rushing torrent; and ever since that time it has been reflected in the heavens in the 'bow of the covenant,' the pledge and promise of the abiding character of that which it mirrors forth.

*Disinterested Service.*

1 Cor. xiii. 5.

Sau Quala, the native apostle of Central Burmah, was, in consequence of his abilities and influence, offered a lucrative appointment by the British Commissioner at Pegu. Without hesitation he declined the offer, though having no salary and depending for food and clothing on the people to whom he preached. He replied: 'I cannot do it. I will not have

the money. I will not mix up God's work with government work. There are others to do this thing; employ them.' And being further pressed with the suggestion that he might continue his work as a missionary, which would thus be rendered easier, he said, 'No, sir. When I eat with the children of poverty, I am content. I did not leave my dear wife and come up hither in search of silver or agreeable food. I came to this land that its poor benighted inhabitants might be saved.' In two and a half years this man had gathered thirty churches and baptized more than two thousand adult believers with his own hands.

*Kindness always ready.*
1 Cor. xiii. 8.

George Herbert, happening at the time to be in his surplice, saw a poor man's horse fallen under his load. He immediately set to work helping to unload the horse, and when he was on his feet, to load him, without noting how he was soiling his surplice. He rightly reckoned the mud-stains marks of honour.

*Kindness and Humility.*
1 Cor. xiii. 8.

Mr. Grimshaw, the Rector of Haworth in the time of the Wesleys, was not more distinguished by the fervour of his public ministrations than by his humility and kindness as a pastor. He would even beg their old shoes from his friends, on behalf of his needy parishioners, and collect his old clerk's salary, when the latter was too infirm to do this, according to custom, for himself.

*Power of Kindness.*
1 Cor. xiii. 8.

Mozelikatze, the Matabele chief, was a great warrior, the terror of surrounding tribes. Hearing of the doings of Moffat, at Kuruman, he sent ambassadors to him to learn more about the work of the white men. Moffat, having entertained them and gratified their wish for information, returned with them to protect them by his influence over a dangerous part of their homeward journey. They persuaded him to go the whole way and visit their chief. The latter, after some intercourse, laid his hand on Moffat's shoulder, and said: 'Father, you have made my heart as white as milk. I cease not to wonder at the love of a stranger. You never saw me before, but you love me more than my own people.'

*Faith, Hope, Charity.*
1 Cor. xiii. 13.

You may have strong, eagle-eyed faith: well, you will probably be enabled to do great things in life, to work wonders, to trample on impossibilities. You may have sanguine hope: well, your life will pass brightly, not gloomily. But the vision of God as He is, to see the King in His beauty, is vouchsafed not to science, nor to talent, but only to purity and love.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.'

*Faith and Hope.*
1 Cor. xiii. 13.

'Faith comes by hearing; hope by experience. Faith believeth the truth of the word; hope waits for its fulfilment. Faith lays hold of that end of the promise that is next to us, viz., as it is in the Bible; hope lays hold of that end of the promise that is fastened to the mercy-seat. Thus faith and hope get hold of both ends of the promise, and carry all away! Faith fights for doctrine; hope, for a reward. Faith, for what is in the Bible; hope, for what is in heaven. Faith purifies the heart from bad principles; hope, from bad manners. Faith sets hope to work; hope sets patience to work.' In a word, Bunyan might well close this discourse by saying to the reader, 'Doth not all this make thy heart twitter after the mercy that is in God?'

*Charity.*
1 Cor. xiii.

From all matter together, we are not able to extract one thought. This is impossible and quite of another sphere. Again, all matter and spirit together are unable to produce one spark of charity. This is likewise impossible, and of a sphere altogether above nature.

*Charity and Gifts.*
1 Cor. xiii. 8.

Charity endures; prophecy, tongues, knowledge, 'fail.' What the Corinthians got by miracle, we obtain by the persevering use of our faculties. Prophecy means the power of interpreting Scripture. A precious gift, but valuable only as a means to an end; 'A time will come when they shall not teach every man his neighbour, saying, Know ye the Lord, but all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest.' All those qualifications which go to make an expounder of Scripture, such as eloquence, critical knowledge, Biblical lore, are only designed for time, and soon shall be obsolete.

*Our Lord's appreciation of Charity.*
1 Cor. xiii.

When Martin, afterwards Bishop of Tours (in the fourth century), was a boy, being the son of a military tribune, he was obliged to bear arms. He was even then noted for his virtues, and especially for his sympathy with the poor and suffering.

One winter of unusual severity, he was marching with his column in the neighbourhood of Amiens, when he passed at one of the city gates an old man sitting in the snow, almost naked, and trembling with misery. None of those who preceded Martin noticed him, so he thought he was specially left to his charity. He had no money, for he had already given that away, so he could only think of his cloak, and, taking his sword, he cut it in two, and gave one half to

the beggar, wrapping the other, amid the laughter of some of his comrades, and the admiring astonishment of others, about his own shoulders.

The traditionary sequel is spiritually true, whether literally so or not. It is said that in a dream that night he saw the Lord, and to his surprise he observed that He wore the half-cloak which had been given to the beggar. Martin was told to look well at it, and asked if he knew it. Then he heard the Lord address the attendant angels, and say: 'Martin, yet a catechumen, has clothed Me with this garment.'

*Elasticity of Charity.*
1 Cor. xiii.

Johannes Buch, of Langendorf, was a poor young wagoner. He had enough of religion to take him to church once and even sometimes twice on Sunday, but he was an ignorant, roystering fellow, and he regularly spent Sunday evening with his companions in the public-house, where dancing, drinking, and card-playing were kept up till Monday morning. One Sunday the word took hold of him, and he saw that religion was something more than putting on a better coat and coming to church. He stayed at home that evening, and read his Bible. Before many weeks his companions missed him, and came to seek him in his wretched lodging. Finding him with the Bible, they laughed at him, and tried to get him to go with them; but he refused, and pressed them rather to stay with him, and hear him read a little. They did so, and he persuaded them to sing a hymn, and a second, and a third, before they left. Somehow they were pleased with their novel experience, and promised to spend the next Sunday evening in the same way. Meantime two miserable orphans begged at Buch's door. His heart being tender, he would not send them away, but made them welcome to stay with him. His friends found them there at their next meeting. They agreed to give twopence each week to send them to school. The pastor came in, and was overjoyed at the scene before him, and encouraged them by a generous contribution. The wagoner could not refuse other poor children that came to him. Many Christian people hearing of it gave their offerings to support the orphans, and in 1710 Johannes Buch had to hang up his whip on a nail, and become an orphan-father; and under his superintendence the present orphan house at Langendorf rapidly grew and flourished.

*The Humility of Charity.*
1 Cor. xiii. 8.

Archbishop Fénélon, the tutor and companion of princes, having heard a peasant bemoaning the loss of his cow, which had strayed, found the animal himself, and drove her back to the poor man's cottage.

# QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

*Charity a Qualification for Service.*

1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Thomas Gajetan Ragland, a second Henry Martyn in mathematical attainment and in devotion as a missionary, wrote the following three lessons, as proved in his experience in India: 1. 'Of all qualifications for mission work, and every other, charity or love is the most excellent.' 2. 'Of all methods of attaining to a position of usefulness and honour, the only safe and sure one is purging our hearts from vainglory, worldliness, and selfishness' (2 Tim. ii. 21). 3. 'Of all plans for ensuring success, the most certain is Christ's own—becoming as a corn of wheat, falling into the ground, and dying' (S. John xii. 24).

*Knowledge and Charity.*

1 Cor. xiii. 1.

'Knowledge' is that of the intellect, education, culture—acquired by study. But if a man has nothing more, he deceiveth himself in thinking that he is an educated man, 'He knoweth nothing as yet as he ought to know.' He is leaving out the most important element—educating his head, but not his heart and affections. Such are to be met with continually in the so-called educated world.

2. 'Charity, love.' 'If a man love God, the same is known of Him.' This is significant—nothing like it is said of the merely learned man. He, as such only, neither knows nor is known of God. But that ordinary person, whom he despises for his weakness, one like thousands of others—that weak brother, a wayfaring man, though a fool—that aged cripple peasant, one who can just spell out a chapter in the Bible, and sing hymns to Jesus—that child—is known of God, because he loves God. That 'loving God' makes all the difference between one man and another. Knowledge without charity is nothing.

3. 'Knowledge puffeth up; Charity edifieth.'

(i.) To puff up is to inflate, as a balloon is with gas. A man may have cyclopædian knowledge, and tower above his fellows like an intellectual giant, but there is nothing in it that will last. 'Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away'—it is no building for eternity.

(ii.) But charity edifieth = buildeth up on a foundation, and never faileth. Such may be laughed at, as uncouth, uneducated—no brilliancy, etc.; still, men possessing this 'best gift' are building on a foundation which abideth for ever.

4. These are the men that God wants in the world, and that we want too. Good men rather than clever are wanted. Of a merely clever person an employer says—'Clever, sharp, witty; but I can't trust him out of my sight: his word is not to be depended on; though he speaks like an angel, I can't keep him.' But of a good person, though he may be dull, heavy, unintelligent, he observes: 'He

is very trying, but honest, truthful, can be trusted anywhere, comes of a good stock, godly—I am glad to have him.' Every one knows the worth of these men. And this is what true education is designed to produce, not merely one puffed up with multifarious knowledge, but one who is taught of the Spirit of God.

*Knowledge and Love.* 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

Knowledge and love, like water and ice, beget each other. Man loves Christ by knowing, and knows Christ by loving.

*Knowledge of Divine Things.* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

'Glass' = window of horn, talc, or thin metal, through which things were seen in a dim, confused, and colourless manner. We see God through the glass, as it were, of our own limited human impressions. The 'Father' has scarcely even all the poor conceptions gained from the earthly relationship from which the name is borrowed. And God as 'Love' is seen by us only as one who loves as we—weakly, partially, selfishly. Heaven also is a place erected by our earthly imagination. To the Indian, a hunting-ground; to the old Norseman, a battle banquet; to the Mohammedan, a place of earthly rapture; to the man of science, a place where nature yields up all her secrets. 'We know in part.' But just what the going out of a room lighted with horn windows into the clear daylight would be to us now, will be the entrance of the purified spirit into God's realities out of this world of shadows—of things half seen. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

*Knowledge in Part.* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

Christians know but little of what they should know; they know but little of what they might know; they know but little of what others know; they know but little of what they desire to know; they know but little of what they shall know, when they shall come to know even as they are known.

But these glimpses that they have of God and heaven here, are infallible pledges of perfect knowledge hereafter.

That little spark of joy is an earnest of everlasting delight, when sorrow and mourning shall flee away; and those sips of comfort are but foretastes of the river of everlasting pleasures which is at God's right hand.

*Knowledge.* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' That single word 'as' is the point of the sentence; for it is not what to know, but how to know, which includes all real knowledge . . . A time comes when we feel terribly that the tree of knowledge is not the tree of life . . . I can conceive no dying hour more awful than that of one who has aspired to know instead of to love, and finds himself at last amidst a

world of barren facts and lifeless theories, loving none and adoring nothing . . . The substance of Christianity is love to God and love to man. Hence the last of the Apostles, when too weak to walk to the assemblies of the Church, was borne there, a feeble old man, by his disciples, and repeated again and again, 'Love one another'; and when asked why he said ever the same thing, replied, 'Because there is nothing else: attain that, and you have enough.' Hence, too, S. Paul: 'Knowledge shall vanish away, but love never faileth.'

*Thoughts on Charity.*

A good will is to regret the misfortunes of another person, as if they were our own; to rejoice in the prosperity of our neighbour, as if it were profit to ourselves; to regard another's loss as ours, and to think that we are benefited in his gain.

Whatever we long too greatly for in this world, we envy in our neighbour.

S. Augustine having been asked which was the first step to heaven, replied, humility; and asked which was the second step, he replied, humility; and which was the third, he again replied, humility.

When the French ambassador visited the illustrious Bacon in his illness, and found him in bed, with the curtains drawn, he addressed this fulsome compliment to him: 'You are like the angels, of whom we hear and read much, but have not the pleasure of seeing them.' The reply of Bacon was worthy both of the philosopher and the Christian: 'If the complaisance of others compares me to an angel, my infirmities tell me I am a man.'

# Ash Wednesday

## Scriptures Proper to the Day.

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|---|---|
| EPISTLE . . . . . | JOEL II. 12-17. |
| GOSPEL . . . . . | S. MATT. VI. 16-21. |
| FIRST MORNING LESSON . | ISA. LVIII. 1-13. |
| SECOND MORNING LESSON. | S. MARK II. 13-23. |
| FIRST EVENING LESSON . | JONAH III. |
| SECOND EVENING LESSON . | HEB. XII. 3-18. |

## OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

### Prayer and Discipline.

*This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.* S. MARK IX. 29.

THE season of Lent leads us to meditate together on the doing of the truth, which is the only means by which we can come to the light of life, to the state of calmness and security and perfect buoyancy of feeling in which we know that we are on the right path towards God. Let us think a little in detail of the means by which it is necessary that we should in that way do the truth as God would have us do it.

Every life as we look upon it is in a deep sense a drama. In the eyes of God it has some one distinct issue, some one tendency of evil which is matched to some corresponding line of good; or some line of good which is matched with some corresponding tendency towards evil; only, clear as is the issue of the plot, the great playwright leaves it to the actors to bring it to what end they please.

And thus to each single life the moral problem that is before him is simplified. What is the chief besetting fault? What is the single virtue which he is called upon to witness? But, because in this way the issues of life are simplified, they are not therefore rendered less great. If we understood the longing of Almighty God to see His

will carried out in all the varieties of human character, we should know that a lifetime was great and consecrated if it only issued in the overcoming of one single fault or the vindicating of one single virtue.

And so, how—in this great drama which God gives us to play out according to His will or against it—how are we to meet the clear, distinct issue which conscience reveals to each one of us? Let us for our guidance use the words which were used by our Lord when He was contemplating the greatest and most difficult species of evil with which His disciples had come in contact, when He said: 'This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.' Prayer and discipline—these are the two great leading principles by which we can play out God's drama as He meant it to be played.

I. Prayer. To us, if we were spectators of the drama of our own life, there would be three points, three elements that would arrest our attention. The one, the evil principle implanted in the will of man; the other, the individual will—feeble, often thwarted, and yet ever struggling for right; and around and above both, the Eternal Cause, the goodness embracing all men, all ages, calm, patient, condescending to wait for its effectiveness upon the allegiance of these single wills.

But the initial strength of life, the part which bids us forth to the combat, is due to the great conviction that on the side of our wayward, erring, and yet struggling will for good is this great, all-encompassing will of Almighty God. To the baptized Christian the conviction comes home with special power because he knows that into the human nature whose lawlessness is the root of his evil there has been engrafted another human nature which is consecrated and strengthened by the obedience to one perfect will, the human nature of Jesus Christ. So, then, there is the single will, and over and above and around it there is the almighty will of God. Now, prayer is just the movement of the single will by which it places itself in correspondence with the will of God. It is the key which unlocks the treasures of the wasting strength and liberates upon our fragmentary lives the power of the eternal will of God.

Let us see how this true conception of prayer keeps us in the struggle to do the truth. We see that, if it be true, prayer is independent of the language in which it may express itself. The speech which God hears is the act or will. It is not for our much speaking, for our crying, 'Lord, Lord,' that we shall be heard, but for our willingness to do the will of God. Prayer brings power in proportion to its sincerity. Thus, in a deep sense it is true that every resolve made in obedience to a sense of the claim of right is effectual prayer, even though it be dumb. It is a movement of the will into correspondence

with the will of God, and therefore it is an appeal to God for the bestowal of His strength, which He is pledged to gratify and to bestow.

Then, second, if that be the conception of prayer, it will be independent of the feelings which accompany it. Is not much of the weariness and fretfulness and disappointment of our higher life due to the fact that we are always tending to measure the reality of our prayer, or the sureness of its effect, by the sense of comfort we have in its exercise? But we must remember that often the fight which is hardest and sternest is just when our feelings are most cold and our vision of the presence of God is most dim. That conscious sense of the presence of God in prayer is a gift of God. We have no right to claim or to expect it. We have no reason, therefore, to be fretful if it be withheld. What we have a right to claim, and to claim with undoubting assurance, is that if our prayer means the laying of our will alongside of the perfect will of God, then the will is set free to work with us and upon us.

So, again, if this be prayer, it is independent of our knowledge of its answer. It is true that in prayer we make supplication to God for this or that detail of life, but is not that because we desire in all things that the will of God should prevail? But how it will prevail, how it will make use of us, how it will discipline and train those lives which we submit to it, it is not given to us to know. That is only within the knowledge of the purpose of God for our lives, whether in this life or in other lives to come which it is beyond us to fathom. Prayer, therefore, has nothing to do with special answers. That is unnecessary, because it places us in the hands of God, who will undertake for us.

So, then, if that be the meaning of prayer that we bring it to bear upon the special contest with evil which God lays upon each one of us, we are delivered from all morbid self-consciousness or anxiety. We need not trouble ourselves to elaborate our language or to work ourselves up to conventional forms of speech. We need not distress ourselves with doubts as to whether our prayers are really heard by God or only heard by the echo of our own hearts. We need not wait with fretful anxiety upon evident tokens of the divine answer. There before us is the evil. We submit our wills to God in the desire to overcome it. We grasp the sword, and then we find that even in the absorbing effort of overcoming our besetting fault we pass from the destruction of self-anxiety into the calmness of disinterested service in the great cause of Almighty God.

II. We submit our lives—that is prayer; we grasp the sword—that is self-discipline. The one necessarily follows upon the other. If prayer be the claim upon the strength of the divine will, self-discipline

is the organising of life so as to bring that strength into effective control over the whole character. They are two sides of the same spiritual act, and one reason why our prayers are so ineffective is because they are not supported with the honesty and the reality of self-discipline. It may be one reason why, in spite of the ceaseless prayer that ascends from the Church of Christ in this land, there is so little done, as it seems, in response to its pleading, that there is behind the praying of our Church of England so little of the reality or discipline of Church membership; that we do not feel that because we are members of a praying Church we are bound to act out in our individual lives the laws of purity, of brotherhood, of self-sacrifice which ought to be the conditions of its membership. And so for ourselves there is no greater need for each one of us than this steady, persistent self-command of all the desires of the flesh, the feelings of the soul, the motives of the will. We must set about the exercise of our character with something of the concentrated vigilance which we bestow upon the business of life. There must be sober, manly perseverance in the effort to bring every detail under the guidance of the great law of God.

It is no simple or easy task. Once we know, even with our limited and untrained self-knowledge, that some fault or sin is setting itself up and becoming the great fact with which we will have to deal, we may be sure that before it has got to that point it must already have interwoven itself subtly with the very issues of our life. It already demands a vigilant, persistent treatment, and it may be the work of years; it may not be the highest, but most difficult courage, which holds on in spite of the absence of praise from onlookers, or that satisfaction of visible results—which holds on, determined to root out at all costs that single fault, and to eradicate it from the inner springs of the character.

For many of us that will be the chief work of life, simply to lay hold upon one single sinful centre and drive it out by the concentrated power of the will set in alliance with the will of God. The work of self-discipline, opened out by prayer, is thus the conquering of these sinful centres. In the development of character, as in the pursuit of ambition, concentration is the secret of success, and most of us have to think less of being saints than of being just pure, just unselfish, just charitable, just good-tempered. For the path of sanctity to ordinary man is narrow—the effort to realise one single virtue, to overcome one single fault. When, by God's grace, we succeed in the effort to drive out the taint of that special evil, and have paused to look around, there will come to us with glad surprise the knowledge that that taint, on its disappearance, has drawn up with it other circumstances which once distressed us. You remember that at the

great battle of Waterloo, the two commanders knew that the issue of the fight would depend largely upon who was able to retain possession of a single homestead in the centre of the valley. And so in the great battle between good and evil—God's battle, that is being waged in the character of each one of us—all depends, without our knowing it, upon whether or no we shall stand faithful to that single task of dealing with that single fault which conscience and God have set before us.

So, then, that is the meaning of self-discipline. We must endeavour ever, outside the desire to bring it to bear upon these single faults, to change and mould the whole temperament and character by its influence. We must beware of that most fatal security which is the mask by which moral indolence deludes itself. Sometimes when we say to ourselves, 'I am conscious of no besetting sin, I feel no call to special effort,' that call is really strongest. We say, 'Peace,' because the muscles of our spiritual nature are being relaxed, and the fibres of our moral character are being weakened.

And so it is necessary for many of us to avail ourselves of special means, like the weekly fast or the season of Lent, to impose upon ourselves some special discipline to exercise the whole character in the readiness of submission to the will of God.

Then again, and this lastly, we have need, all of us, to watch. How we wander in that wide country that lies between the first suggestion of evil and its actual commission; that borderland between desire and doing, which is so full of delight; that dallying with temptation, which is the secret force that undermines the characters of many of us, looking for one moment to the evil, drawing a shade of pleasure from the sight and then turning away! Believe me, it is a habit of mind which is utterly inconsistent with realising the divine presence, and nothing but continuous self-discipline can drive it out.

Realising the divine presence—that is the thought which gives us the need and the joy of self-discipline. The need of it—how could enough self-discipline be brought to bear upon our characters if we reflected that deep down in the solitary recesses of our being there is not only that secret of ours, but the supernatural presence of Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose yearning for our souls is measured by the symbol of the Cross. And the joy of self-discipline becomes the thought of the presence, transforms discipline into discipleship, and it becomes to all of us the means by which we can feel the thrill of a great companionship, a companionship which draws us gradually from the licence of self-will into the rest, the security, the freedom of perfect peace.

# ASH WEDNESDAY

## Penitence.

*I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.* S. Luke xv. 18.

IT is perhaps well, at the very beginning of a Lenten season, that we should have some one thought or idea which may help us throughout its whole length, something which may seem to give the colour to the whole of the season about which we are concerned and through which we are passing. And it does seem to me that there is no verse in the whole of the New Testament which more directly shows us what Lent ought to be than this old familiar verse which I venture to take as my text to-night. Think for a while what was the attitude now of this young prodigal to his father. He had now for the first time become conscious that it was against a father he had sinned. He says, 'How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father.' It is the thought of a father's love, nay, of a father's forgiving love, which is the motive of the man's penitence all through. And, depend upon it, that must be the motive of our penitence; I do not believe in the reality of any other motive than this. Fear may be coming into our thoughts, but fear does not lead to penitence; the thought of a terrible sin, the consciousness of a sin, of itself does not lead to penitence. It was not the thought of this young man's misery that made him come to himself. If misery had been able to bring a man to himself, surely misery would have brought Judas Iscariot to himself. No, it is not misery, however great, and however self-inflicted, it is love that moves to penitence; it is the thought of fatherhood, it is the consciousness that we are the children of God, and that the Father loves us and cares for us, and that it is against a Father's love that all this time we have been sinning. There is the real motive; it was the motive in this young man's case. Think how far he had gone wrong; an extreme case is perhaps taken, and it seems to me to be taken almost on purpose to cover every conceivable case. If this young prodigal, who had gone as low as it was possible for man to go—if this young prodigal, who having a kind, loving, indulgent father, sinned against him again and again, if he is brought round by the thought of his forgiving love, pray, who is not covered by such a picture as this? Can any one say, 'The love of the Father is not a love which I can appeal to'? If this prodigal could be brought home by the thought of the forgiveness of the Father, then I do not believe in this wide world there can be a soul which cannot take this teaching to itself.

# OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

I. Observe then first the attitude, the attitude of penitence, the attitude which ought to be our attitude throughout the whole of this Lenten season. We are coming to God at this season as penitents asking Him to forgive us all our sin; we are about, I trust, to examine ourselves to see wherein our weak points come, to see where exactly we are best able to grow. All through the attitude is to be the attitude of a child to a father; it is to be the motive that is to lead us back to the Father; it is to be the motive to help us draw near to the Father in the consciousness that we are children drawing near to a Father whom we have offended: that ought to be the leading, ruling thought throughout the whole of this blessed season. But now let me take a further point in advance: so far I have spoken of the attitude of the penitent—it must be the attitude of a child drawing near to a father; but now let me suggest as a second thought, that penitence does not consist simply in attitudes. The attitude is of importance, and the attitude in this case is of supreme importance—it is a child drawing near to a father; it is not, as it were, a child and then a father. There may be an attitude when neither party is moving at all; you may stand before a statue, and you may stand motionless: there is the statue and there are you, and there is an attitude of yourself towards that statue. That is not to be the attitude of the penitent; the penitent is to be the child drawing near to the father. 'I will arise,' he says, 'and go.' I pray you to notice from these words the teaching of Scripture in reference to penitence; it is that penitence is not simply the attitude of the child to the father, but it is the child consciously drawing near to the father, and making a resolute effort which that conscious drawing near means. 'I will arise, and go.' Was it such a very simple thing for this prodigal to arise and go? Think how deep he had fallen: here was a young man, the son of a kind, loving, and indulgent father; he makes a request to that father which you and I know perfectly well he has no manner of right to make; he has a father who is indulgent to him, therefore it is the basest ingratitude on his part to say, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' It is not only the basest ingratitude, it is perfectly plain that the young man is foolish; he does not know how to spend the substance of goods which he asks for and obtains; there is the supremest folly on his part as well as ingratitude, and yet he obtains it, the father allows him to have it. God sometimes in judgment gives us what we ask for even though it may be to our injury. And he obtains it, and when he has obtained the substance, the portion of goods that fell to him, he thinks for a while that he will tarry at his father's home apparently, for we are told 'not many days after,' as if he had thought there was no necessity at first to go to another country. But he soon finds that it is impossible to have two masters

in the old home, and therefore he must leave it. Let the father be master there and he will go, and so he takes up his goods and goes into the far country. And you and I know what that far country means, know perfectly well that it is a country that is very easy to go to and very difficult to get back from. He goes into the far-off country, and there he spends his substance in debauchery and riotous living, and he begins to be in want; and then he has no thought at present of coming back—misery does not bring him back. No, he goes and becomes the slave of the citizen of that far-off country; the word 'joined himself to' really implies nothing but slavery; he became the slave of,—the literal word and meaning is, he was glued to a master,—and he became the slave of a citizen of that far-off country. And he gave him the most ignominious work that a Jew could receive at all; I suppose it would be impossible to insult a Jew more than to send him into the fields to feed swine. And that is what the prodigal son in the story had to undergo. And then he wakes up to the consciousness of a father's love, and he says, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare,' etc. But, observe what arising and going in such a case must have meant. He was first of all the slave of the citizen of that far-off country; do you think he could easily break off from the slavery? You and I know the slavery of sin that is intended, we know perfectly well the difficulty of breaking off this worst of all degradation, and we know perfectly well that there were other slaves, and he had to break away from the jeers and scoffings of his comrades. And yet in spite of the difficulties, in spite of the degradation, in spite of the fact that he was emaciated with starvation, in spite of all the difficulties which are not emphasised, which are left for us to infer, to teach us that however great the difficulties may be, they can be overcome,—in spite of all, he says, 'I will arise and go to my father.' And not only does he say it but he does it, he does arise and he does go. Now surely, as I said just now, as the thought of the father's love here seems to cover every case, so surely the thought that this young man could return in spite of all his difficulties, must cover every case in like manner. It shows us that there is not a single case, not a single penitent soul, however far that soul may have gone away from God, there is not one but can return by the grace of Almighty God; there is the power, there is the slavery, but there is One who can release the slave; there is the starvation, the emaciation, but there is One who can give strength to the starveling to return; there are the jeers of comrades, but there is One who is able to give power to the real penitent, the soul which is touched with the Father's love, to bear bravely all those jeers and scoffs of comrades and to return. This is what we find, and surely, if this be so, then your case and mine, they

are covered, whatever our sins may be—and we have all of us got some besetting sins, and I take it they are different; our sins differ so very widely; there are probably not two members of this congregation who have precisely the same kind of besetting sins;—but whatever sins they may be, they are covered by the teaching of this wonderful parable.

II. 'I will arise,' that is the great thought. It is a resolute effort, it is the determination now to turn over a new leaf, to let the love of God sink into the heart, to become the penitent whatever the cost may be; and then there is, 'I will arise and go.' The steady effort of traversing a road back to the father's home; a road perhaps along which we have been hastening before, but a road which we find it a slow and difficult and tedious process to return by; that is the road of penitence; many a fall there may be before we succeed in overcoming the besetting sin. It may be we have given way to some selfishness, and the thought of self again and again seems to baffle; or it may be there is some violent passion or temper which gets the better of us, and again and again we seem to fall and to be unable to break the bonds of sin. Or it may be some other kind of subtle temptation, some subtle pride or conceit, possibly a form of pride which is hidden from others around us, but of which we ourselves are profoundly conscious; or it may be some subtle form of unbelief which is eating like a canker into the spiritual heart. The sins vary, they differ, but whatever they may be, here is the same teaching, 'I will arise and go.' Let this be our Lenten discipline: we may say, 'O Father, Thy forgiving love has touched me, I could not else desire to return at all if Thou hadst not filled me with the consciousness of Thy forgiving love; I am Thy child; Thou dost make me Thy child; I never made Thee my Father, but Thou hast made me Thy child, and therefore I am by Thy act, by Thy grace and choice, I am Thy child, and Thy love does come home to me, and Thy love has touched me and I am conscious that I have been erring, going far from my Father's home; and now the love which all this time has been shining upon me when I have been forgetful of it, that love of Thine has at last come home, and I will arise; give me, O Father, the power, the power to arise and to go, the power to make the real resolute effort to turn to Thee whatever it may cost. Grant that this Lent I may be able to overcome some, at least some one, besetting sin, and to turn to Thee as a child comes back to a faithful, loving Father.' Surely if we take the teaching of this parable, and if we apply it to ourselves, we shall apply it in some such way as this, 'I will arise and go.' But there is one deeper, further thought, and it is this, 'I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned.' Is it not a matter of profound significance to us that the son should utter these words when he determines to return, and

that he should adhere to them, adhere to them almost exactly in their entirety, when he sees the father; in spite of the fact that before he can utter a word the father has already forgiven? Now, there is one important omission you will notice when he meets the father; he determines to return, he determines to address the father in those words, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.' He goes to meet his father. The difficulties we are not told —we are left to infer them, they must have been terribly real; but the father, we are told, directly this son has determined to return, when he was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, and had compassion. The earthly story absolutely breaks down beneath the weight of heavenly meaning. Not even a parable of our Lord's, not even an earthly story told by the Saviour, can bear the heavenly meaning it is intended to bear; there is nothing on earth that can give the exact picture of love so marvellous, so profound, as the love of the Eternal Father to man. 'When he was yet a great way off the father saw him.' How could a man, how could you and I, see a son the distance off the Father sees him? The father saw this son when all that terrible distance off, and we are told the father ran. This implies the love, the tenderness, the impetuous eagerness with which the father greeted the son. And he does not wait for the son to apologise, as we should say, or to express his regret; no, he does not wait for that, he simply falls on his neck and kisses him, he has compassion on him; and though the son has disgraced him, and though he is a swineherd now, and has sinned most grievously, yet in spite of all this the father receives him with the tenderest love, falls on his neck and kisses him. That is the love, that is the tenderness, and that is the forgiveness. And now, how does the son treat the father when he is thus forgiving? Does he say, 'There is now no necessity for me to say I have sinned at all'? Does he say, 'My father has forgiven me, let us forget the evil past'? Just as those nine lepers, you remember, whom our Lord had cleansed, nine out of the ten, probably thinking the past was so hateful they did not desire to be remembered of it, did not go back to give thanks to Almighty God. No, the past, hateful as that past is, must be recalled, and recalled with the consciousness of its hateful character. But observe all through, from beginning to end, it is the child coming to the father; he keeps hold of this truth of the Fatherhood of God, this truth which keeps him safe, which, as it were, is his pilot all through; it has been the motive of his penitence, it helps him, guides him all through his course—and the course of penitence is often stormy—but the thought of the father keeps him safe, and he says, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before

thee.' Remember it is an earthly story we are reading, and the 'against Heaven and in thy sight' is most instructive when you remember it *is* an earthly story, because as coming from an earthly son to an earthly father it implies that while the son has terribly sinned against the father, it is primarily against the Father in Heaven, and so he says, 'against Heaven and before thee,' or 'in thy sight.' Observe that the sin which he realises now is a sin against God; he is conscious of that; it is undoubtedly a sin against his father, but he is profoundly conscious that it is primarily against God. There is a verse in the familiar Fifty-first Psalm exactly similar in its import; David says, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' Had he not sinned against Uriah and against Uriah's wife? If ever there was a sin against man, I take it that was the sin of David, and yet though it was a sin against man it was primarily a sin against God; and David was so absorbed in the thought of his sin against God that he says, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.' And so here the prodigal son says, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.' He is profoundly conscious that it is a sin against God, that all that he has done against his father is really done as it were before his father and against God. But there is one thing which he leaves out; he does not say now, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants'; he is conscious that to say that would imply a selfish distrust of love that had been showered upon him. A child he is, a child he does not indeed deserve to be, but a child for all that he knows that he must now remain; and being conscious that he is a child, and that he must remain a child, he does not any longer say, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants'; he simply stops short of that, and he says, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' What a model for penitence is this! what a model for penitence to carry us through the whole of this Lenten season!

III. I have suggested to you that the whole thought of this passage is a thought which may help us every day in Lent; that the thought first of all of the Father's love is the motive to penitence, and as guiding us through penitence is the thought for us during the whole of this season. And then I have ventured to suggest that the teaching of this passage is the resolute effort at any cost to arise and go, an effort which ought to characterise us and our conduct throughout the whole of Lent. Each day we ought to say, '"I will arise and go"; my besetting sin is a sin that requires that I should bring it to the foot of the Cross, asking the Father to forgive it for the Saviour's sake; I will bring this sin there, and I will arise and go, and all my life shall be the going of the son to the Father.' But surely here is further teaching; we may be profoundly conscious that the moment we are really

determined to return the Father is conscious of it, that the Father sees a long way off, that the Father runs, that the Father has compassion, that the Father will fall on our neck and kiss us, that the Father will forgive; we can be conscious of it. Do not let our penitence be a selfish penitence, let it be the penitence of a child all through, a child who knows that the Father is more anxious for his salvation even than he can be himself. Do not let us get it into our heads, this kind of idea that God is trying to trip us up; let us keep hold of this truth that there is not one of us who can care as much about his own soul's safety as the Father cares; He is a Father and He tenderly loves every one of His children. But tender as that love is, deep and profound as it is, and not to be expressed in words, never let that love, that deep and marvellous love, prevent the expression of our penitence when we come to the Father in sorrow; let us remember that this prodigal son teaches us how to come. 'Father,' that is how we may begin—Father ever; and so when we open daily morning and evening prayer we may say, 'Almighty and most merciful Father.' It is always as children that we come to God as penitents. 'Father, I have sinned': the prodigal knew perfectly well wherein he had sinned, and he told the father, 'I have sinned.' Now you and I must supplement the general confession on our knees in our own chamber to our own Father, trying to recollect what our besetting sins are in which we know we have sinned, and then bringing them and saying, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee.' And then if we have sinned, and are conscious that we have sinned, against our neighbour, if we know that we have done wrong against our neighbour, let us remember that that offence, great as it is, is after all primarily an offence against Almighty God, 'against Heaven and before thee.' And so it does seem to me that this old familiar verse, a verse I take it that we have all of us heard scores of times, that we know by heart, and that perhaps again and again we have thought of without thinking how deep its meaning is to ourselves, is a verse that may be almost a Lenten motto which may help us each day of this solemn season. Cannot I learn from this passage that the Father's love is to be a motive of my penitence, and my penitence all throughout? 'I will arise and go to my father.' It is not only an attitude of a child to the Father, it is the resolute effort to return, it is the determination to cast off the besetting sin; it is the honest real effort and sacrifice, great as it may be, to traverse again the road that leads us back to the eternal home. That is absolutely necessary if the penitence is to be genuine and real. But more than that, the Father loves me, the Father sees me a long way off, the Father has compassion, the Father falls on His penitent child's neck; but, Father, surely no love on Thy part shall ever prevent my

coming as Thy penitent child to Thee and saying, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee.' So shall our Lenten penitence lead to the glory of Easter, and the return of the child to the Father shall be the entering of the child into the joy of the Lord.

CANON JACOB.

## The Lenten Call to the Church.

*O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* SONG OF SOLOMON, ii. 14.

SUCH is the Lenten call of God to His Church, clothed in the form of a parable. The parable is clear indeed: we are carried by it in thought to the mountain district of the Holy Land, and we are standing at the foot of some rock that lifts its head to heaven. This rock is the dwelling-place of birds who make their homes within its clefts, and who dwell in its deep recesses. At the moment when we gaze upon this rock we see a Jewish cragsman rising from ledge to ledge, ascending as it were by a natural staircase, and he is treading familiar ground. Often is he wont to climb that steep ascent and to rest upon the mountain-tops; so much so that the very birds have become familiar with his presence; he is at home with them and they with him. But with one of these he has entered into very close relationships of intimacy; it is a dove that has its home in one of the many clefts that are around. And he climbs the rock this day with the hope of seeing this dove, of gazing on its countenance, which in his eye is comely; and of listening to the music of its voice, which to his ear is sweet. And as he climbs thus he says, 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock.' Plainly this is a parable. Why should such a natural scene as this find its presence in the Book of God if it is not the natural presentation of a deep and spiritual verity? And the parable is not difficult to interpret; the cragsman is God, God as He came to the Church of Israel of old, God as He comes to us now through the ministries of the Incarnate; the Christ comes nigh to that sacred mountain which is the dwelling-place of His people, and upon which is reared the structure of His Church; He comes near to us specially as at this time, when the days which she is entering upon are days of repentance, and He cries to her to lift to Him the dove-like countenance and to speak to Him with the dove-like voice; to lift to Him the countenance that is beautiful with the recovered beauty of penitence, and to speak to Him in the beauteous mild tones that mark the worship of our deep contrition. For the dove is ever in the Bible the type of the penitent; her note is ever

spoken of as the song of the contrite. Thus, for instance, you will remember how that Hezekiah said that he did 'mourn as a dove'; you will remember how that Isaiah paints Israel as a company of mourning doves; and in that full picture in the seventh chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, that prophet, who is essentially the prophet of the life of contrition, tells us that when Israel is returned from her captivity to the Holy Land she shall be on the mountains of Israel like the doves of the valley, every one mourning for their iniquity. (Text.) Listen to this beautiful Lenten call that comes to the bride from the bridegroom's lips, and be it ours, during the days of this Lent, to respond to that call, to lift to our Saviour the face of the contrite, and to speak to Him, to His heart of hearts, with the voice of a true repentance.

I. Notice to whom this call of repentance comes. It is not the call to the world, it is the call to the Church, 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock.' Is not the dove the undefiled one, is she not always the type of the Church of Jesus Christ? and who is it that dwells in the clefts of the rock? The Christ's own people; those who are not only His people by external covenant, but those who are His people by dwelling in Him with the repose of a living faith. What a wonderful description is given to us here of a true believer's relation to the Crucified One! His sacred, wounded form is his very dwelling-place, it is to him the place of rest in life's weariness, it is to him the place of safety in life's dangers. Ah! blessed indeed art thou, my child, if thou art dwelling in the clefts of the rock of ages. What is dwelling in Him? He draws nigh to thee, thy living, loving Lord, and what He asks from thee now is the dove-like countenance uplifted, and the tones that come from the mouth of the dove. In other words, He asks from thee, dwelling in the clefts of the rock as thou art—He asks from thee the offering of thy true contrition; 'the sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' And so we find ourselves face to face with the thought which I wish to lay upon your minds on this first day of this most solemn season, so big is it with such splendid possibilities for yourself, for your Church, and for your Lord. And that thought is this: the Christian life is to be abidingly, until the judgment day comes, a life of contrition. We are not as a rule inclined to admit the fact; contrition is too generally looked upon as a passing stage in the earlier days of Christian living. The thoughtless man is arrested, or hope is given to the despairing man, and the effect of that is this, that he looks upon his sin, realises his sin, and sinks at the feet of God with the prayer upon his lips, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Then in God's own good time and way peace comes to him, it may be soon, it may be after days or weeks or

months of long waiting; according to the Father's wisdom, sooner or later God lifts up the light of His countenance upon him, he is enabled to look upon Jesus as his personal Saviour, and he takes from that personal Saviour his personal forgiveness, the joy of reconciliation fills his heart, and, says popular theology, the days of contrition are ended. Ended! why, they are only just begun. What is contrition? Contrition is not sorrow for the *consequences* of sin, contrition is sorrow for sin in itself. The contrition that precedes reconciliation and peace is a most imperfect contrition, because what fills the sinner's heart that is awakened with the dread that possesses it, is not sorrow for sin but sorrow for the consequences of sin; he sees himself to be lost, and the cry that comes over his lips is the cry of a concentrated though legitimate selfishness, 'What must I do to be saved?' This is not real contrition; if he is to pass on into true contrition and to be able to make the Fifty-first Psalm, for instance, his own, if he is to sorrow before God for the sinfulness of sin, and not because of the personal consequences of sin to himself, there is but one way in which God can deal with him: He must take out of his contrition all elements of fear of the consequences of sin; and when God in His own love fills the soul with the joy of forgiveness it is not for the drying up of the sorrow of contrition, it is for the perfecting of the sorrow of contrition. Forgiven, ay, thank God, beyond any doubt at all, all that past is forgiven; like the great penitent of Hippo, the pardoned sinner says, 'That I have committed the transgression I acknowledge, that Thou hast forgiven me these my iniquities, my God, I know it.' 'Blessed is the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven.' What is forgiven sin? Sin utterly undone. Does not sin live on in its consequences when the guilt of sin is removed? Is it with the sinner himself as though he had never sinned? It is true his past sin is forgiven him, but the consequences of his sin are fixed in his own inner character, and are carried by him into his new life. What are the weak points in our character but just those very portions of our being which were weakened in old days by sin? Again, as we try to live for God and find ourselves sore let and hindered by opposing habits of evil, where were those habits of evil formed? Again, as we are perpetually tempted by memories of past transgression, as our imagination, our low imagination, lays hold upon scenes in the past and re-enacts them and lives them through again, whence come they? Whence have you this knowledge of evil? Whence have you this diseased imagination? Whence! why, it is the consequence of my past sin; and how can I, when in the experience of the present I am realising what the meaning of sin in the past was, and when I can dare to look at it because I am forgiven and need not dread its eternal issues, how can I do anything if I am wise but

sorrow for my sin? Forgiven sin is cancelled sin—nay, it not only lives on in us, it lives on in others. There are those, it may be, in old times whom we held back from goodness, or positively tempted to evil; we have been arrested in our path by the grace of God, but they have not been arrested. Nor is that all: that one again has influenced others, and each of those others influenced others still, and the influence for evil that once went out from my life is living on in an ever-widening circle though I myself have been set free from sin. How can I then go on my way glibly and laughing, as though I had never marred my being as my daily experience proves that I have marred it? How can I go on lightly when I know how many are at present held in the grip of evil because of my misused influence in that thoughtless and that wicked past? Nay, nay, I repeat, God deals with us mercifully and forgives us the consequences of sin in order that we may now dare to look our sin in the face in its sinfulness and fall before Him and say this, 'Thou, God, hast forgiven me my sin; I never, never will forgive it or forget it myself; my sin is ever before me.'

II. Again, not only are we thus called on as believers in Christ, dwelling in the clefts of the rock, saved from the consequences of sin, to mourn because the past sin is living on; we are also called on to mourn before God for our daily inconsistencies and transgressions. Who is there among us that sinneth not? Is there one among this congregation dwelling in the fools' paradise of an imagined sinlessness? Oh, vain and delusive dream! Such an one will never offer to God that which He demands from him, never lift to Him the dove-like countenance, nor speak to Him in dove-like tones. As a matter of fact, we know quite well that we Christian people are a people held to a frightful degree in the grip of the littleness of our nature, that our whole life is marked by inconsistencies; we know quite well that of all the obstacles that are barring the advance of Christ's cause in God's world, infinitely the most mighty is that of the inconsistency of Christians, that if only we once had a consistent Church, a band of men and women who lived their profession and set their creed in the eloquence of conduct, then we should have a conquered world. And we go upon our way absolutely and utterly failing to realise how our own daily sins and inconsistencies are resisting the power of the Passion of the Redeemer, and are rising up in constant collision with that longing of His sacred heart which is breathed out in His ceaseless intercession. An interceding Christ and an inconsistent Church! Ay, it must not be; for our own sakes, for the world's sake, for the Church's sake, for Christ's own blessed sake it must not be. God, of His mercy, give to us a contrite Church! God make this Lent in England memorable as a Lent in which His

professing and believing people fall at His feet in one common consent to breathe out before Him their sorrow for their daily inconsistencies and their daily shortcomings.

III. And yet once more, we are dwelling not alone but in the midst of this great world; separated from it in one sense, and yet in another sense specially united to it and one with it because we are Christ's. Christ's people are in Christ's world for the world's good; we are one with this great society in which we are dwelling, we cannot ignore this law of solidarity; and what do we see around us, but sin at the very root of society?—I am not using the term 'society' in a limited sense. What do we see but all things out of gear, men's hearts failing them for fear at that which seems to be coming on the world—a world in which evil is mighty, and in which apparently God's Church is weak? O for the increase among us of those who sigh and cry for the abominations of Jerusalem! O for the increase of those among us who will learn this truth, that the great mission of the Church in this age emphatically—as indeed in measure in every age—is to be sorrowing for the sins of our brethren before God, and drawing nigh to Him in the spirit of a new contrition! I am as convinced of this as I can be of anything, that the one great need of the Church to-day, for the increased manifestation of the power of grace in her children individually, for her power in the world, for her glorifying her Lord and giving joy to His heart by realising the fruit of His Passion—that the one great need of the Church to-day is that she should be awakened to the knowledge of her sin, that she should turn to her God as with one heart and with one mind, that her people should be united together in the union of a magnificent contrition, lifting to her Lord in heaven a countenance that is comely with the beauty of penitence, and speaking to Him in confession, in beautiful penitential Lenten services with the voice of the truly contrite.

If this idea of Lent is to be realised in any way, bear with me if I try to bring before you before I conclude some plain and practical lessons that may help you towards the attainment of this object. And first of all remember this, that our contrition depends for its continuance and its increase upon our dwelling in self-knowledge, and seeking an increasing self-knowledge. Conviction of sin underlies all contrition for sin and all repentance; and the measure of contrition, and the measure of the manifested repentance, can never be greater than the measure of that conviction. But we shrink back from it; we do not want to know ourselves, we are cast down whenever God moves our conscience to speak to us in tones of sternness and reproof; we turn away from our efforts of memory to recover the past, turn away from fixing our minds really and truly upon our sin in its exceeding sinfulness; we love to sing the Church's songs of thanks-

giving, but we love not her Misereres; we love to crowd her courts at festivals, but we care not for the sternness of her Lenten discipline. This then is the first thing, honestly seek from Almighty God more self-knowledge; or in other words, honestly seek from Almighty God this Lent a deepened conviction of sin. Seek it in the first place by prayer; ask God to fix what Isaiah calls the eyes of His light right upon your inner character and your outer life; ask Him to search you through and through and to bring out of the inmost recesses of your being that which is contrary to His blessed will; call upon Him with strong crying and tears to give you fresh measures of conviction of sin. And that your prayer may be really and truly practical, add to your prayer the practice of definite self-examination; let this examination be not hurriedly performed; let it be the work of Lent to prepare your confession of sin, to bring it to God's feet, it may be in the last days or weeks of this solemn season; honestly and truly go into the deep depths of your own being, and by self-examination find out what your sins have been and are. And, thirdly, cultivate contrition by meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ. When you have discovered those sins, do not leave them merely upon your memory, but bring them into the light of Calvary and see what they mean in the light of that; seek from God the light of true compunction for sin. Oh, if you can only through this Lent thus attain to a more real and true self-knowledge, if this Lent you could only be brought more to see your sinful self in the light in which God sees it, and to sorrow for that sin in union with your Crucified Redeemer upon the Cross, then the effect of Lent will be no mere transitory thing, then you will have learned in Lent how to live when Lent is over, in the gladness of Easter, a life of true contrition.

Yet once again: your contrition must find expression. Draw nigh to God in this conviction of sin which He in His mercy gives you, always cleaving to the knowledge of your forgiveness, always knowing that when we are in Christ the fresh sin we discover is yet under the cleansing of His own most precious blood. Do not let go your personal hold on your personal forgiveness in Christ Jesus, or else this increasing conviction will fill you with discouragement, and it may be drive you to despair; no, lift up to Him through it all the countenance which is indeed comely in His sight, because in it two great features of beauty blend to make one splendid whole —the feature of grief for sin committed, and the feature of joy for sin forgiven. And then speak to Him; seek in every way in which you can to learn how to take upon your lips in reality in Lenten services the beautiful penitential worship of the Catholic Church. Speak to Him in constant confession; let no detected sin lie upon your soul for a single moment, but bring every sin that He brings before your

mind to Him immediately, and lay it down at His sacred feet, knowing that He in His love condescends to accept the confession of sin committed as the outward form in which we offer to Him the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. And let this Lent be also not only a time in which you breathe out your repentance thus by spending it at the feet of your Crucified Redeemer, and by telling Him the iniquities you discover, but let it also be a time of honest, definite amendment. Not simply a time in which for a few passing weeks you adopt a transitory law of self-discipline, though that in itself is helpful, but let it be a time in which there is honest definite amendment; the honest breaking away from some sin that holds you in its grip, the honest giving up of something that is to you the occasion of sin; the honest surrender of yourself in covenant promise to your Lord. If only you will spend your Lent in this way, in response to the call of your Saviour, which I have brought before you, you shall come out of it strengthened, you shall come out of it full of peace and full of joy; having thus drawn nigh to your Lord in the dying of repentance, you shall possess the capacity which shall enable you to take in big measure the fulness of the Easter joy; and through the discipline of Lent and the joy of Easter you shall be abidingly nearer to your Lord. One word more · what then is the real motive for keeping your Lent? Personal profit? That indeed is a motive which it is right for us to cherish, for it is our duty to God to do all that in us lies to secure our own true well-being. The good of the world? this again is a motive to which I have appealed, and it is a right motive. Seek to come nearer to Jesus yourself that you may be greater powers for Him in His world. But there is a higher motive than these, the joy of the Lord. A people bowed in contrition at the Lord's feet are His joy and glory as the Crucified. When He sees you thus kneeling at His feet, lifting to Him that penitent countenance, and hears you speaking to Him in those contrite tones, He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. And the true motive of keeping Lent is that which is the true motive of all devotion, the joy of Jesus and the glory of God.

CANON BODY.

# ASH WEDNESDAY

## Sins and Faults.

*Wash me throughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me.* PSALM li. 2-3.

THE Psalm in which these words occur is especially associated with the season of Lent. It is appointed to be said by ministers and people on Ash Wednesday, and may thus be supposed to indicate the sort of spirit which should mark the season which it begins. The language of David in this Lenten Psalm is very intense and miserable. You know that he is supposed to have uttered it when conscience-stricken at a grievous crime which he had committed. And, perhaps, some persons may consider that such sentiments are very appropriate in the mouth of one who has sinned so grossly as David, but rather too strong for ordinary people who keep clear, or are supposed to keep clear, of the greater offences against morality. Some, indeed, may think that even the term sinners can be applied to themselves only in a modified sense, and that while they make a sort of complimentary concession to the exigencies of public worship by the use of forms in which strong expressions of penitence occur, these expressions really refer only to the cases, isolated cases, of such as are conscious of having been guilty of some great offence or offences. There cannot be a greater mistake. No man is very wide of the mark when he calls himself a sinner.

I. Let me now make a further use of our text. When we talk about our offences, and admit the fitness of the term 'sinners' to ourselves, there is no doubt a difference in the offences we commit. Without affecting to suppose that this distinction is referred to in the English words of the Lenten Psalm, we are permitted to draw a distinction between 'faults' and 'sins.' But we cannot afford to treat what we call faults as unworthy of the truest religious self-examination and resistance. We must not think that mere faults may be let alone, or put up with, as not of very much consequence after all. They really have a disturbing influence over our lives, which is almost beyond our calculation. They not only have that possibility of growth which may transform them into greater offences, as the rent becomes worse, but they possess a power of minute accretion which may darken our whole lives.

Great sins frequently bring their own condemnation. We have to look sharply after the smaller. It is the detection and weeding out of these little offences which especially need our self-examination and self-knowledge. As we have a good heart at bottom, so we shall the more earnestly use the help of the Searcher of Hearts to get rid of these seeming specks, these little seeds of mischief.

Great sins are only the taller thistles which grow up above the meaner throng of weeds. They are these meaner weeds, these petty faults of impurity, indolence, temper, vanity, and the like which need our constant and strenuous watch. They are the sins which in the main spoil our crop of godliness, and make the common crowd of sinners. Small comfort for them to flatter themselves that their faults are not so very grave, nor so very heavy. Perhaps not, one by one; no more than flakes of snow. But I had as soon be crushed by a rock as smothered in a snowdrift. It is the persistence, the reiteration, the accumulation of these little sins which hamper us, and keep us down, and bury us.

II. And yet each may be met and mastered. It may be mastered with the less difficulty because it does not entail that loss of character which makes it so hard to rise from a great social offence. The fault has a root certainly, but not a very deep one, in our souls. It may be plucked up without a revolution in life. It will not tear out our heart along with it. Mischievous as it is, we can get rid of it. But we shall not get rid of it rightly unless we perceive its wrongness. We shall not get rid of it rightly without using the grace and help of the Great Power, without God Himself.

Let us, then, not think that conspicuous offences alone are sins, but admit the mischievousness and real ungodliness of those habits which annoy or otherwise hurt ourselves and others. Let them not be beneath our most devout concern. Let them not be thought too small for the pardoning, confirming grace of God. Let us use nothing less than the mind and life of Christ to shake off and pluck out these so-called faults. Let us see how fitly we can use in our own commonplace cases the language of real penitence, and confessing ourselves to Almighty God with full purpose of amendment of life, seek His gracious help. Let us see that the life and work of Christ are none too grand and lofty to be sought and used if we would get the better of little but mischievous sins. PREBENDARY HARRY JONES.

## National Penitence.

*'Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark,' and the remaining verses in the Commination Service.*

CHRISTIANITY is often charged with depreciating the virtues of the good citizen; it has thrown, we are told, all its emphasis on holiness rather than on justice, on purity rather than on truth. It has its home in the inner mysteries of the spiritual life, in the unseen struggles and aspirations of the soul; to it the outer circumstances of the visible and social environment are matters more or less

indifferent! And more especially will this inward tendency, we might say, declare itself at a season of penitence such as Lent, when the spirit of the man is sent back upon itself, is summoned to explore the inner recesses of his will, and to sift and analyse his deep-seated motives, to examine himself and confess his sin, and enter into the shadow of self-humiliation. That is what is meant by the religious season of Lent, that is all the main mass of earnest believers intend by their Lenten devotion, and the earnest social reformer, even if he can allow all this penitential trouble to be spiritually valuable, cannot but ask whether it is calculated to create or to invigorate the strongest type of the good citizen at his work in the big world. Can the two things hang together? Do the two cities correspond to the city of man on earth that now is, and the city of God, the Bride of the Lamb?

I. Anyhow, our Prayer Book has a very clear idea that they do. It has, indeed, a great deal to say in Lent about sin, and penitence, and confession, and pardon, and all the mysteries of the soul at war with itself. It would dedicate its Lent largely to those invisible struggles where a spirit wrestles all night in some black loneliness of agony, face to face with the nameless God whom it will not let go until He bless. Nevertheless, it deems it part and parcel of this same spiritual process to start off at the opening of Lent with the demands recorded in my text. Plain and straight enough, these rough and homely words. No unearthliness about them! We are not wafted off into any mystical world, strange and vague, and intangible and remote, hovering, faint and far, before our secret imaginings. No, indeed! very near it lies, this world of which we speak. Very obvious and very matter-of-fact these obligations that they press home. It is not a question that concerns some future condition of the soul in the silent bliss of heaven; but what is the state to-day? what is it doing at this hour? what will it be about to-morrow?

The entire concern is with positive, outward, undeniable facts, not with inward temper, or moods, or emotions. It is our acts that are arraigned. And these acts are all of them social; they are acts done by us to or towards our neighbour; they are the acts of citizens living under the close and incessant responsibilities of an organised society.

This is the way to begin your Lent. So the Prayer Book says; this is the door through which to pass within the recesses of the divine humiliation. If you want to draw nearer this year to the blood-sweat of Gethsemane, and to the bitter cross of Calvary, and at last to the holy sanctuary of your Easter feast, then there is one inevitable inquiry which blocks the way. It is perfectly simple, and no one can mistake it. It is this: What sort of citizen are you?

II. We can find no such wrong in ourselves. No; but we are

members of the society which is thus at enmity with itself; members of a nation which is embittered by heart-burnings, members of this Church which fails to interpret and justify itself to the people, the goodness of God the Father, the compassion and joy and strength of Christ our King. Look away to-day over the nation at large, and behold there the evil to which our selfishness contributes, the sorrow and the hate for which we must share the responsibility. Let us attempt to take up the public burdens! That which dishonours England is our personal dishonour. That which puts Christ to shame lies heavy on our souls. Let to-day be a day of national humiliation for presenting to God so disheartening a result of Christian civilisation as that on which our eyes sadly fall. Let us ask ourselves why we, a nation, have sinned away our national peace—our national confidence in the name of Jesus. Why has the curse fallen upon us, the curse of a divided house, the curse of nameless fears, the curse of miserable impotence, the curse of cureless ills, the curse of paralysed judgment, the curse of blighted hope? Into each separate soul these questions must pierce like barbed arrows that cannot be withdrawn. Only according to the measure with which each solitary conscience takes home these things as matters of private personal concern will the day of remedy dawn. Therefore it is that you and I are charged by the Church to face these tremendous arraignments at the opening of Lent. Therefore, to-day, we ask each for himself with trembling anxiety to put the question to himself: Can it be that I, as member of a class, of a profession, of a trade, of a society, of a Church, of a nation, have, indeed, ministered in any way to this curse? Can it be that unawares, in negligence, in culpable disregard, I have wrung gain out of the weak, I have shifted my neighbour's landmark? Have I aided in perverting the judgment of the fatherless and the widow? Have I joined hands with the unmerciful and extortioner, and the covetous, the drunkard, the adulterer? If I have, God be merciful to me a sinner! God be merciful to the nation and the Church that sinned! 'O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!'

CANON SCOTT HOLLAND.

## Repentance.

*Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* S. LUKE xv. 18, 19.
*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* PSALM li. 10.

THE two texts which I have just read will indicate the subject to which, and to which alone, I would call your attention. I shall try to bring home to the individual heart and conscience of some

among us one or two thoughts such as the season as we all understand it fitly suggests. There is a lesson which I would welcome myself and commend to you as in harmony with the best and truest and most inward teaching which Ash Wednesday can bring us. The twofold text contains, as you see, a voice from the Old Testament Scriptures, and a voice also from the New; a fragment from one of the most familiar of our Saviour's parables, and a fragment from the most familiar of the Psalms, which forms part of the Commination Service.

I. Placed as I have placed them they remind us that repentance is made up of and contains at least two elements closely united and not to be separated from each other, yet for all that clearly two and not one. What are these? Think for one moment: when we speak of repentance as a something which we feel, or have felt, or would feel in our own hearts, what is it that we mean? There is first, surely, the sorrow, the shame for wrongdoing, the sense of pain at having gone astray. 'Father, I have sinned; though Thy son, I have ceased to deserve the name.' Who of us has not known something of this feeling? Happy are those who have felt it most keenly, who have learned at times what it is to say, 'I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.' This is one thing, but with this there is something more and something equally essential. There is not only the sense of something gone, but also the earnest craving to recover what is gone, not only the contrast between what we are and what we would be, or what we might have been, but the desire to regain the ground that is lost. Shame, then, shame at our own wrongdoing, and a desire to escape from it, the sense of alienation and a desire to escape from it: these two lie twined closely together, but lie at the very basis of Christian repentance, and they are surely two things, not one. It is the more necessary for us all to remember this, because in common language we are too apt to limit the meaning of the word to mere sorrow for the past, to confound repentance with remorse, to think of repentance as looking only backward—not forward also. If we take the English word 'repentance,' and trace it to its first origin, it carries us back to a strangely suggestive and very interesting, if narrow, circle of ideas. In the language of those who first coined the word, it carried with it the idea of the soul inflicting the penalty, inflicting the punishment on itself. We see that far, far back in the history of our race. The homage of the soul to the broken law of duty, the self-inflicted pang, the inward, unseen punishment—that, beyond all doubt, is the first original meaning of the word. 'I have sinned against heaven, I would fain suffer for it.' But, be this as it may, we know that in the gospel, and in those parts of the Old Testament which most clearly foreshadow and

plainly rotten. Others, on the contrary, appear to distrust an inherited belief simply because it is 'old.' They welcome almost any suggestion, if only it promises 'change.' In the face of these contrasts, how shall we respond to the call that we should 'search and try our ways'? Does this invitation apply only to the details of personal life? Has it nothing to do with the thoughts of our hearts, and the questions of our minds? It must have much. We cannot rightly examine our lives apart from our convictions. We are not in the position of those who have no law to follow. The exhortation, for example, in the Communion Service is that the intending communicant should examine himself by 'the rule of God's commandments.' And thus when an appointed season arrives for self-examination we must needs apprehend what these are. Thus we may perceive and know what things we ought to do.

II. We are bidden at this season 'to search and try our ways . . . and turn again to the Lord.' Here is the key to wholesome self-examination and reflection in days of religious inquiry and spiritual settlement. Turn to the Lord. Behind all the views, opinions, inquiries, and speculations of the passing day, there is a living Power whom we call God, a Father of Spirits, with whom ours are meant to be in conscious communion, making for righteousness, in all things and thoughts, whether, in the words of Scripture, we eat or drink, or whatever we do. Turn to the Lord. That is, earnestly desire, pray for, keep the heart and mind open to receive and use the power to have a right judgment in all things. Turn to the Lord. He it is who clears the vision, and makes the heart strong. Every good gift cometh down from the Father of Lights. With Him (a grand thing in these days) is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Believe in, trust to, this living centre and fountain of all life and growth.

This turning to the Lord Himself, this determined self-emancipation from the pestering importunity or plausible suggestions of this or that book, personage, or school, this recognition of, apprehension of, the mighty Lord, before the mountain of whose presence, knowledge and power, the greatest fabrics of human thought and deed are molehills in a dirty field, is our strength and stay when we set about the search and trial of our ways. This will help to save us from the danger of being carried off our feet by any waves of shifting opinion.

When we search into our hearts it will be hard if we do not find that for which to thank Him in our lives. Help in the past is an assurance of help in the future. Take comfort in that, and do not even be afraid of committing the sin of self-respect. Do not imagine that the whole intention and result of self-examination is to realise our 'faults.' That is part of it, but only part. Turn to the Lord. Remember the reality of our relationship to God. Our faults look

black when seen in His light, but believe in that light. Do not obscure it by only weaving a veil of penitence before your eyes. Look up, not down. God wants no men to crawl into His presence like slaves. If we see our faults and would be rid of them, if we feel that in any respect we have acted unworthily as His children, turn to the Lord. Remember the man in the parable who said: 'I will arise and go to my father.' He had been searching his ways, and he found much that was very bad in them. But remember what the father did: 'While he was yet a great way off, he ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.'

PREBENDARY HARRY JONES.

## New and Contrite Hearts.

*Make me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.* PSALM li. 10 and 17.

WE can hardly spend our few minutes to-day better than in thinking a little of the beautiful collect which we use to-day and after to-day through the whole of Lent. It is meant to be continually in our ears, as on our lips; gathering for us into a few words the sum of Lenten thoughts, the spirit and meaning and hope of penitence.

It is built upon the psalm which we use so often in Lent, the psalm which embodies the penitence of King David.

I. 'Who hatest nothing that Thou hast made,' 'Qui nihil odisti eorum quæ fecisti.' It is a bold and beautiful address from uninspired lips, not from the Bible, but in the very spirit of the Bible. We are the work of His hands, He knows whereof we are made. No folly, no wickedness of ours can have changed His heart towards us. In weak man love thwarted, wronged, despised turns often to hate; it cannot do so in God. He 'forgives the sins of all them that are penitent,' not until seven times, but until seventy times seven. No sin so black, but that when the heart is changed, the sin is forgiven.

II. 'Create and make in us new and contrite hearts.' The words come, as I said, from the Fifty-first Psalm. 'Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' 'A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' We use them in consciousness of that. It is the prayer that the Holy Spirit taught the deeply sinning, but yet tender and generous-hearted king, the prayer which was answered. It is part of the summing-up of human experience: 'Thou forgivest all them that are penitent.' The Holy Spirit taught him, and will teach us. As He has taught us to use the

Moses had been the type, and S. John the forerunner, whose footsteps He followed through solitude.

He desired also to teach us by example, that when we deliberate concerning the great issues of life, or concerning any other weighty matter, we should withdraw from the crowd of men, and collect our thoughts in solitude; since, when we would have audience of God, our deliberations are assisted by solitude and hindered by the throng of men. For even the comic poet (Terence) has said, 'He comes prepared from somewhere or other, from a solitary place.'

What are the reasons for the temptation itself?

There are many reasons given: 1. That it behoved a new warrior to distinguish himself even in the exercise ground; and to be hardened to a more difficult fight by lighter skirmishes.

2. That having been tried in all ways, He may be able to succour with the greater sympathy us when we are tempted (Heb. ii. 18).

3. That He might teach us by His example, when we take upon us the service of God, to prepare our souls for temptation (Eccles. ii. 1).

4. That the enemy being forthwith overcome, we might be rendered the more secure. 'Be of good cheer,' He said, 'I have overcome the world.'

Consider the character of the Temptation.

'Man shall not live by bread alone.'

So that He begins with the necessity of the body. But mark the craft of that wicked demon, and whence he begins his temptation; for by the very means whereby he cast out the first man, and encompassed him with thousands of evils, by these same means here likewise he weaves his deceit, namely, the craving appetite of the body. But Christ, to show that the virtuous man is not compelled even by this tyranny to do anything that is unseemly, first suffers hunger, then submits not to what is urged on Him for its relief; teaching us, though it be no transgression which the devil commands, yet not even so to obey.

S. J. EALES

# ASH WEDNESDAY

## 'Just Time to Recover the Day.'

*To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.* PSALM XCV. 8.

AT the battle of Marengo, Napoleon arrived on the field in the afternoon. The battle was going against him. He looked at the western sky, where the sun was beginning to slant; then, turning to the officers of his staff, he said, 'There 's just time to recover the day!' And then he put forth all his force to cheer and push on his men, with such good effect that he turned defeat into victory.

And so the French were victorious. But France of that day might well have trembled to think how different the issues of the battle might have been. Had the emperor failed to realise the gravity of the situation, or, having realised it, had he failed to act at once—above all, had he spoken in tones of hesitancy instead of striking that cheery note of hope, in which there was no sound of doubt, but only of confidence of victory, 'There 's just time to recover the day!' the historian would have had a different story to tell about the field of Marengo.

We may feel thankful indeed for such seasons as Lent, in which the Church seeks to rouse her children out of the lethargy and indifference which come creeping over them. Without such seasons, with their special calls to penitence and prayer, many of us, I fear, would go fast asleep and forget our Christian warfare altogether.

I. Now the first thing we notice is this, that the emperor realised the gravity of the situation. He did not deny it; he did not underrate it. In short, he did not deceive himself!

But there is many a man living a life of wilful sin, who is uneasy about his spiritual state to-day. Something tells him that he is in danger, and drifting into still greater danger. And yet he says, 'Oh, I am all right,' when, as a matter of fact, he is all wrong.

Well, such a man is deceiving himself, and Satan gives him his best assistance in doing so.

II. Then, in the next place, I notice that when Napoleon saw that things were going all wrong that day, he determined to try his best to put them right. He proceeded to act.

Surely some of us have gone on calling ourselves 'miserable sinners' long enough? 'God is a Judge, strong and patient; and God is provoked every day'—and not least of all, perhaps, by people who call themselves 'miserable sinners,' and yet love to remain so, and have no wish to be anything else.

III. Once again, Napoleon, when he had resolved to act, acted at once.

'To-day if ye will hear His voice.'

Men go on dreaming of the great things they mean to do for God, *some* day. 'Details not yet arranged; time not fixed; plenty of time; no hurry.' Ah! well may it be said that hell is paved with good intentions, as well as with false hopes.

'God, who promises pardon to repentance,' says S. Augustine, 'promises to-morrow to none.'

IV. But one thing more I notice. It is that note of hope sounded in the words, 'Time to recover the day!' How the words must have cheered the spirits that were beginning to flag. The general was come. He had spoken—not of defeat, but of victory! They knew him; they trusted him; the day could not be lost now!

It is not too late for any of us, though perhaps there's only 'just time to recover the day!'

J. B. C. MURPHY.

## Divine Forbiddings.

*Thou shalt not.* Exodus xx. 5.

I. 'THOU shalt not.' Fix your mind on that word 'not.' All the commandments, except two, are prohibitions, not precepts; they forbid—they do not enjoin; and this might be made an objection to their asserted perfectness. Every virtue, it might be said, cannot consist of negations, much less holiness. A man is not necessarily virtuous because he abstains from violations of law. A man might be a hermit of the wilderness, where he could not steal, or kill, or lie, and yet be entirely devoid of charity, honesty or truth. 'Virtue,' as the pagan moralist said, 'is fairer than the morning and the evening star'; but he said also, 'It is a practical habit of doing virtuous acts.' It would be a pale star if it meant nothing but abstention from deeds of wrong. How much more true, then, is this of holiness! The standard of holiness is so transcendently loftier than that of virtue, that the word virtue does not occur once in the Old Testament, and only once, in a very subordinate manner, in the New. How much more, then, would holiness, which fills the burning and shining spirits around God's throne, be a cold and lack-lustre thing were it merely bound by 'Thou shalt not'! This objection against the perfectness of God's words as our rule of life is at once cancelled by our Lord's expansion of them to every look and impulse and innermost desire. But, even then, we do not at once see why the commands should not have run ordinarily, 'Be kind,' 'Be pure,' 'Be honest,' 'Be truthful,' 'Be contented,' instead of 'Thou shalt not kill,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Thou shalt

not steal,' 'Thou shalt not lie,' 'Thou shalt not covet.' The reason why the fourth and fifth commandments are positive in form is because they do not run counter to our natural appetites. The other commandments are prohibitions, because in every instance there is a desire, a tendency, a temptation of our fallen nature to break them. The negative in the Commandments is the most terrible commentary on the fall of man.

II. In Scripture the first man and the first woman broke God's express command and ate the forbidden fruit, bringing

> '. . . death into the world and all our woes
> With loss of Eden.'

Of the two first children born into the world, the eldest becomes a branded murderer, the second welters in his blood, a murdered victim. So wretched, so fallen, does the race become, that 'it repented the Eternal that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved Him in His heart.' On the first page of Scripture we read of the Deluge; on the last page, four thousand years later, the doom of dogs and sorcerers and murderers and idolaters, and all who love and make a lie. One man and his family are saved from the Deluge, but hardly had its lustral waters ebbed away than that one man became the first drunkard, and his son and his grandson show themselves utterly detestable. 'There is no man that sinneth not,' says Scripture; 'the heart of the sons of men is full of evil and of madness.'

We turn to experience, and every large heart beginning life with glowing faith in human nature finds around him every day such mountains, such an ocean, of what is despicable, that it requires the aid of all his religion to prevent him from saying: 'However we brazen it out, we men are a little breed.' Saints and sinners alike have been horror-stricken at the thoughts of their own inward vileness. S. Theresa saw the fashion of her own soul, and it seemed to her like that of a leprous child. When Hugo Grotius was on his death-bed, they read him the parable about the Pharisee and the Publican; and good and great as he had been, he groaned aloud, 'I am that publican.' When John Randolph, the American orator, lay a-dying he said to his servant, 'Bring me a card.' 'What shall I do with it, sir?' 'Write on one side, "John Randolph," and on the other, "Remorse"; put it into your pocket, and when you want to know what best expresses the soul of John Randolph, take it out and look at it.' 'My life has been a complete failure,' said a great man ere he died. How many myriads have thought and felt the same! We look into our own hearts, and see if we differ in any respect from the great multitudes. Alas! we see that they are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that there is iniquity even in our holy

things, that our tears want washing, and our repentance needs to be repented of.

And then we see why the Ten Commandments are prohibitions, not precepts. They are so, to save us, if possible, from becoming, what so many men become, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, lovers of money, lovers of self, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. They are to put us on our guard that the attitude of our minds must be constant watchfulness—not the morbid terror of the half-dazed ascetic, but the manly alertness of the sentinel sure of his foe. Each of God's 'Thou shalt nots' reminds the good man that he must fight manfully under the banner of his Eternal Captain whose he is and whom he serves.

III. 'Thou shalt not.' That 'not' should become, then, like an iron nerve within us to resist the blows of temptation. It should remind us that we are warned against sin by the terrible voice of God's just judgments, warned against it because 'that way madness lies,' and ruin and misery. That everlasting 'not' of God should guard the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; it should be a ray to every one of us like a flaming sword of a cherub to keep us out of sin, to disenchant our earthly senses from the foul glamour of the world, the flesh, and the devil. They should be tremendous words of love and mercy to deliver us from evil, when we remember that 'God spake these words and said.'

DEAN FARRAR.

## The Perfect Life.

*If thou wilt be perfect, follow Me.* S. MATTHEW xix. 21.
*Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.* HEBREWS xi. 2.

THE formation of character depends upon the struggle between opposing forces. We know something about forces —we modern men who are the children of science, and who are living practical lives. Watch, watch, even if you are not scientific, the rage of the Atlantic in a storm. Notice how the waves scourge the suffering ship. Notice how the sails are torn, the cordage broken, the gangways themselves sometimes swept away. Stand on the heights of Western Ireland, stand on the cliffs of Cornwall, and listen to the thunderous music of the sea: you are face to face with that great fact, a natural force. Go along the mountains when the thunder is gathering; watch, if you like, the travelling of the processional clouds; listen to the reverberation in the caves; see the mirrored light which flashes, which illuminates the almost lurid

gloom; and as you struggle along the torrent, and as you feel the forces, and as you listen to the cry of thunder, acknowledge that you are face to face with a force. Or stand by the great lake of Michigan in Northern America, and watch the engines pumping up their hundred thousand gallons of water for the use of Chicago, so many thousands of gallons in a minute, and you see you are face to face with a great force.

Then, turn from nature to that vast and varied thing, so beautiful, so tender, so perfect, so heart-breaking, so triumphant, turn to human nature, and there what is it that you find? I submit that you find three great workshops where constantly forces are being forged from your character.

I. First, there is the workshop of imagination. It is a great and wonderful workshop; it is endowed, it is equipped, as it was built, by God. It can deal with things with the exactness and idealism of Angelo himself; it can bring up the distant, it can make the future present. In the midst of your clouds of London it can give you sunlight and beauty. But it can forge one terrible weapon—it can forge terror; for imagination, remember, is the workshop and home of craven fear.

Turn to another workshop. You have not only imagination, you have also the workshop of the sense of pain. Pain is the deepest thing in life. Pain may make men brave; but pain may make men cowardly; and sometimes the sense of pain, the possibility of pain, forges a weapon very much like the weapon forged by imagination. It forges terror; it forges also fear.

Then, remember that third workshop. Ah! there you are at home indeed! There is the workshop of the passions. The passions—those terrible, those fierce desires, uncontrolled, ungoverned, carrying men, not where they would, but where sometimes they feel they cannot help. Passion, that uncontrolled desire, that leads and guides and tosses and strains and forges within us all great and terrible weapons. Passion, as it is a force, so it is a workshop; and, like imagination, or the sense of pain, all controlling, unless we are governed by the power of the Crucified.

II. Live by hope. We are a grim nation; we affect tragedy. Our poor people love funerals: and we go about our religion dressed in drab, as if religion itself were the affair of undertakers and mutes. We are a grim nation; grave because we are strong. But above all men on the face of the earth, because of our nature, because of our efforts, because of our great place in civilisation, because of the rush of life, we must guide ourselves by an indomitable hope. And I say to you, hope always, hope ever. I say to you that the sin that is yours stops the way. Remember Salviati in his sorrow

painted Hope darkly. Remember Angelo in his strength painted Hope with the foot of a great archangel planted on the deep, and his eyes looking up to God. Remember, you may paint your hope darkly; but you may paint it in the colours of eternity. Christ has died; Christ has promised. Many hopes may be buried; wrap them in Christ, and they have resurrection. And when your passions come to lead you wrong, when you are prepared to use that great force of desire, which is the raw material of manhood in its sanctuary, when you are prepared to use it at the obedience of lust, when you are filled with fire, and when you have your bad moments—lift up the thought that even now, in this hour of your temptation, God is guiding, God will not leave you. Lift up your heart to Him, that beyond this world there is another world, there is the hope of glory. And let Hope do its work.

First, make you cheerful in work and sorrow. Then make you pure, for he that hath hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure. Then make you persevere; and try again, and try again, *and try again.* And then make you pray, for prayer is the voice of hope, and hope is the inspiration of prayer.

In front of the path under the great frieze marked out by the genius of Phidias there stands a little temple dominating the great rock. Standing there you see the wide circle of the Attic Mountains; standing there you see the stretch of sea at Salamis, where Athens conquered and beat down tyranny by the power of a determined effort. That little temple is the temple of Nikē Apteros, the temple of the Wingless Victory. Victory, said Athens, shall never leave the shrine of our city.

Your soul is like the Attic nation. Your soul looks out on the rugged mountains; it looks out on a long stretch of infinite sea. Make in it the temple of Nikē Apteros; make in it the temple of the Wingless Victory. Make in it strong determination by the power of the Crucified in the grace of God, that no matter what comes or goes you will fight your passion, you will fight the world; you will live for a complete and thorough and loyal character. And you will achieve it by God's grace in the power of an indomitable hope, for before you lies the hope of glory. There is another world; after all the toils there is a reward to those who win; there is a crown for the manly; there is a crown for an unconquerable hope!

CANON KNOX LITTLE.

# First Sunday in Lent

## Scriptures Proper to the Day.

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| EPISTLE | 2 COR. VI. 1-10. |
| GOSPEL | S. MATT. IV. 1-2. |
| FIRST MORNING LESSON | GENESIS XIX. 13-30. |
| FIRST EVENING LESSON | GENESIS XXII. 1-20, OR XXIII. |
| SECOND LESSONS | ORDINARY. |

## I. COMPLETE SERMON

### Christ's New Commandment.

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.* S. JOHN xiii. 34.

HERE is a beautiful legend concerning the Apostle S. John, that when in his extreme old age he was instructing the disciples who gathered about him, he contented himself with repeating the words, 'Little children, love one another.' And when his disciples at last grew tired of hearing this saying so often, and besought him to tell them something new, he refused to do so, because if they only loved one another there was nothing else, he declared, which they need be told. Love is enough. Love is the sum of the gospel. Love is the greatest of all things. Love is the whole duty of Christian life. Such was the feeling and such the teaching of the Apostle who is marked in the pages of religious history by this special characteristic, that it was he whom Jesus loved.

Now the establishment of love as a positive duty meant one of the greatest revolutions that the world has ever seen. For it was a new commandment which Christ gave, gave not merely in words, however binding and authoritative, but in the whole power and meaning of His own life and death, a commandment which He, as it were, imposed upon Himself, and which must therefore reign for ever over the human heart because in His own person He fulfilled and obeyed it. It was a new commandment, penetrated as it was by His spirit and resting

as it did on a new basis. Men had heard nothing like it before, for it demanded something more than a merely negative goodness, the mere avoidance of wrongdoing. The old commandment was negative—'Thou shalt not': the new commandment is positive—'Thou shalt'; the old defended, the new attacks; the old forbade, the new ordains; the old said—'No,' the new says—'Yes.' To simply avoid temptation, to escape the chance of going wrong; to be contented if you have not fallen and satisfied if your life has been respectable and free from grievous fault—haply a few have attained this limited ideal. Is that all for which you are struggling? Do you indeed aim so low? These things are something, but Christ asks for more. 'Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal'—all these and every other negative commandment He sweeps away with one imperious gesture and turns to point us far upward in His positive commands. 'Thou shalt,' 'shalt love the Lord thy God, shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

And surely the man who is dearest to the great God, who is so near, so very near to us all, is not the man whose life has been a low success because he has merely refrained from evil and never sought the good which is so painful to attain, so difficult to keep, but the man who is so filled with the love of truth and goodness that he seeks for it everywhere, who dares to brave the opinion of his neighbours in the cause of duty, who presses on to leave some definite mark of Christian light upon those about him, or it may be on those in far-off lands at a distance from himself, who demands the baptism for which his frail nature is almost too weak, who is often fallen, often downcast, often crushed, often overtaken by difficulties, mistakes and tears, and yet struggles up and on, never ceasing to labour, never ceasing to hope, never ceasing to follow his Master with bleeding feet along the narrow pathways that lead up to God. It is that man whom God crowns with the crown of life, that man to whom He stoops to whisper, 'Much hast thou loved, therefore to thee much is given—and forgiven.'

'A new commandment . . . that ye love one another.' Seeing then that this is a new commandment because it is a positive commandment, asking not only for the avoidance of evil but for some earnest and definite effort after what is good, let me remind you in a very few words what is the extent of this love and what is its source.

I. In extent this love is as wide as humanity itself. Whatever is human is the object of Christian love. Nothing that is human ought to fail to interest in a higher sense than it did the dramatist of Rome. Here again is a singular revelation, and one which we ought very carefully to notice. Up till the birth of Christ no such

claim as this was ever recognised. Primitive man, as the scientific historian tells us, confined his duties to members of his own family. Outside the family all men were his enemies, whom it was even honourable for him to kill and to rob. Later on, when families coalesced into larger societies, there was still the same barrier between city and city. Whoever did not belong to a man's city was an enemy whom he might enslave or destroy, and to whom he owed no duties; and even when national life came into existence and all within the same nation were bound together by ties of sympathy and fellowship, no duties were recognised towards men of another nation. And those who saw dimly, like the ancient Stoics, that man as such has a claim upon man were but a few thinkers whose thought had very little practical effect even on themselves. And but for Christianity I do not see why we should not be in that condition now. It was by Christianity that the great practical truth was first brought forward, that love is due to all men, that beyond the ties of family and race and relationship or religion, every man owes a duty to every other man, that humanity itself is bound by ties which never can be broken nor dissolved.

In some respects have we not yet to learn this lesson in modern life?—especially in the relations of rich and poor, employee and employer; the rich man who despises the poor because he is not possessed of certain external advantages or occupies a certain social status; the poor man who hates the rich for enjoying what he himself has not; the mistress who treats her servant simply as a servant without giving her the sympathy due to her as a human creature; the one who only works because she must, and so far as she must, regardless of the sincerity and faithfulness which all true human relationships must involve: all these are breaking Christ's new commandment, are forgetting that no earthly distinction can obliterate and destroy the greatest of all facts, that every man is the child of God. And perhaps one of the saddest things in modern Christianity is that so many of us professing Christians suffer our sense of social importance to overshadow for us the eternal truth that God has no respect of persons.

II. But the basis of this Christian love, which was to be our second point, is the Fatherhood of God. Because God is the Father of all, therefore all are brothers. There is but one family on earth, the family of man. On this foundation the religion of Christ builds up its spiritual democracy. The ranks and conditions and professions of life, the infinitely varied differences of calling and position, of race or family or prospects, all these it treats as matters of comparative unimportance. It neither attacks nor defends them; it simply lets them alone. But behind and below these forms and

trappings there is still the soul of man, and in any great crisis, in any tragic issue, in any stirring event of life or death, there, wherever soul asserts itself, there men are equal. And it is the soul with which Christ has to do. He cares for the body, but it is the soul He loves, and it is for the soul that He claims the love of Christian men and women—just upon this ground that all are children of one Father in heaven, all subjects of one redemption, all destined to one palm, through death.

No doubt it is with some such feeling of the 'one touch of nature,' that 'makes the whole world kin,' that you will contribute what you can this morning to a society [1] which is based upon this very principle of our common humanity and sonship and which strives to make all men the sons of God in a sense in which they are not yet. Instead of bringing before you the details of mission work, which are wearisome to some, I have tried to remind you in a few words of the great principle upon which this Society for the Propagation of the Gospel is based. It is an attempt to realise in active work Christ's new commandment, this positive commandment which, springing from the sense of the Fatherhood of God, reaches as wide as humanity itself. 'Little children, love one another.' No limits of race or nationality are recognised by this society. Its authority, its width of range, is testified to by this fact also, that it is, as a recent speaker expressed it, nothing but the Church of England in its missionary aspect. It is the Church of England going forward side by side with the English Empire. Every addition to the Empire means an addition to the Church. Every new acquisition to the Empire brings with it, irrespective of national or political or religious differences, a new sphere of mission work, a first responsibility to the English Church.

This fact, then, of the common humanity of men, is the fact which renders possible the progress of this society, just as, indeed, it renders possible the progress of civilisation as a whole. Unless men were brethren there could be no civilisation and no common Christianity. And if you realise this, if you feel that this positive and active love is imperative on all of us, as Christians, and that this love is as wide as mankind itself, because it is based on the Fatherhood of God, then you cannot but do all in your power to help a society whose very existence is bound up in these ideals.

On this First Sunday in Lent I am confident that you will all make some little self-denial in giving for the help of your brethren, often untaught and uncared for, often lonely and helpless in far-off lands.

Here, indeed, is an opportunity for us all to show that we are

[1] The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

truly seeking to be the followers of Christ; Christians, that is, in the sense that we too, like Him, are capable of self-sacrifice, that we too, like Him, are dissatisfied with a Christianity that has cost us nothing, are ready to press on and do some definite and actual service for our fellow-men. This, as we saw at the first, was the life as well as the teaching of our Lord Himself. He might, had He chosen, have remained in obscurity and lived a happy life; He might have neglected His own new commandment. He might have escaped, even at the very last, the shame and agony of the Cross. But it was not so that the world was to be redeemed; it was not so that God's purposes were to be fulfilled. A life of ease, however pure of guilt and error and wrong, was not enough for redemption. To save the world from sin, He had to love the world, that is, to live for the world and to die for the world. For that He must be betrayed by one from whom His Father's angels might have saved Him; for that He must bear the bitterness and sorrow of this earthly life; for that He must drink the cup which He need never have put to His lips, and receive the fiery baptism which nothing but infinite love could have undergone.

So He lived as well as taught His new commandment. So He bids us, in our short passage from the cradle to the tomb, to love one another, even as He first loved us.

S. A. ALEXANDER.

## II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

### The Grace of God.

*We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* 2 CORINTHIANS vi. 1.

THERE is a strong contrast between the two Epistles to the Corinthians. Grievous evils had found their way into the Church at Corinth. The body of believers whom S. Paul himself had won for Jesus in his first visit to those shores of Greece, those who bore the name of Christians, had given great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme; and the first Epistle was written to rebuke and correct them, to bring them to a knowledge of their sin, and to an amendment of life. The second Epistle, which came a few months later, was written after the Apostle had received from Titus a report of how that first Epistle had been received. He had heard of the repentance

of the offenders, he had heard of the sorrow of the brethren for their sins, and he writes to comfort and encourage them, to assure them of his love and care for them, and yet still in some measure to warn them, to guard them against the like danger in the time to come. And this is the tenor of the verse which I have taken for my text. It is a warning that they should not trifle with the mercy which was offered to them for their salvation.

I. First, they had received the grace of God; they had all received it; the gift was granted to them; it was theirs to use. This is ever the language of Scripture. 'We love God,' S. John writes, 'because He first loved us.' Our Saviour's parables set before us constantly the same truth. The sower has sown the good seed in his field, although the tares may grow there as well; the master who goes into a far country has committed the talents to his servants that they may make profit of them against his return. There is a trust that is committed to every child of God, to every baptized Christian to whom the admission to the privileges of the covenant has been granted, a trust which he has actually in possession, and for the right use of which he is responsible to his conscience and responsible to his God. Nay, even the heathen outside the pale of the Church of Christ have a measure of light vouchsafed to them, a message of mercy from God, something they are bound to use. The Apostle argues so much in the first chapter to the Romans. The case of the heathen is not the case of the Christian; his light is as darkness compared with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, in whose light our lot through God's mercy has been cast. Nevertheless the gift of salvation is for all. He who called Himself the Son of Man died for all mankind. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and He through the grace of God tasted death for every man. He was the propitiator for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world; and so we see there is a gift for all. There is no limit to the atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ, none for whom it was not shed if only they will avail themselves of the gifts according to the light which is granted unto them. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And as the effect of the transgression of Adam was universal, so the deliverance by which that condemnation was removed was as comprehensive in its scope. Therefore, we see that to all to whom the message comes, a season of grace is given, an opportunity of using the talent, whatever it be, committed to their charge—using it, and not abusing it. This is what the Apostle seeks to impress upon the Corinthian believers, to whom he is writing. 'Behold, now is the accepted time,' he argues, 'now is the day of salvation.' The gate is still open, and there is time to enter in. The call is given, and if

God gives the call He gives power to obey it. He will not mock the creatures of His hand; the strength needed God will not fail to supply if only the believer will do his part. He must; he must labour. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' The resolve of the will is needed, the purpose of the heart. 'Our wills are ours, we know not how'; our wills are ours; we may bend them to obey their Maker's will. We cannot gain God's favour by sitting still and dreaming about Him. We have work to do that we may win the prize; and the neglect of this labour is what in the text the Apostle deprecates—that is, the abuse of the trust committed. That is receiving the grace of God in vain.

II. In the great parable of the Sower, under the figure of the ground on which the seed was cast, our Lord Himself has given us the warning, which the Apostle here repeats, of the way in which the grace may be received in vain. Upon each soil the seed actually fell, in each case there was a possibility of growth. There was an opportunity for development; there was a power to increase; but it was only on the good soil that the harvest was reaped; all else ended in failure and disappointment.

And so it is with the grace which is the gift of God's Spirit in the heart of man. The heart which is given to the things of earth, which seeks to live by sight only and not by faith, can afford no harbour for the Spirit of God to abide in. The message then falls upon unheeding ears, all full of mercy and blessing though it be. It is heard, but forgotten as soon as heard. Carelessness lets it pass unguarded, even as the seed that fell upon the stony path, trodden hard by the traffic of men's feet, could take no root and disappeared as if it never had been sown. Alas! how often do we see this realised in nominal Christian lands, even with those who come to our churches, who join in outward devotion, who listen to sermons and criticise them afterwards, and talk of the sermon as good or bad, interesting or uninteresting, of the preacher's manner, the preacher's delivery! They do not think of the lessons which he may have sought to convey; they do not study to apply them to the amendment of their lives for the comprehension of things spiritual, or the growth of their own souls. What can the grace of God avail if, when we receive it, we seek not to cultivate it? What can the word spoken profit if it be not mixed with faith in them that hear it? Those who trifle with the gospel, who pass by the message as if it were not worthy of their attention, how can it be but that they receive the grace of God in vain?

III. One point there is on which I may briefly touch—the office of the Apostle as a worker with God—the privilege of his ministry. He who has received the gift and profited by it, he who has tasted that

the Lord is gracious, who has faith that worketh by love, will ever seek to make others partakers of his joy. Every Christian is a preacher of the gospel—not only the Apostle, not only the minister of the gospel in all ages ordained to that office; but each individual believer also by his life and his language and his influence can make the excellence of the gospel known, and be a missionary to help to win souls for Christ. In this work he is united with his Saviour; in this Christ works in him and with him; Christ suffers in him and with him; in him Christ is glorified that he may be hereafter glorified with Christ.

D. SCOTT.

## The Whole Earthly Life of the Christian a Passion-Tide.

*We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* 2 CORINTHIANS vi. 1.

OUR present entrance into a fresh season of Lent must surely awaken in one or other of us many kinds of feelings, which have entered with more or less clearness into our thoughts. Alas! what else is our whole earthly life but a Passion-tide? And if we cast a glance into our previous life, we recall many an Easter, in which the exulting spirit has testified in our hearts, that in spite of all its darkness and weaknesses our earthly life is really an Easter; and again of a Whitsuntide, in which the same Spirit said to us: 'Rejoice! through God's mercy this thy life of pilgrimage has been entirely changed into a continual Whitsunday.'

The whole earthly life of the Christian is a Passion-tide.

I. The truth of the assertion that the Christian's life is a Passion-tide will become sufficiently evident if I show you how, on the one hand, the main object of this earthly life is Christ crucified, who is preached by God and in God's word to the Christian, and held before him as the object of his faith; and, on the other hand, the chief task of the Christian is to learn to believe on this crucified Christ, and to be fashioned unto His likeness by communion with His suffering.

The Holy Ghost uses a particular energy in guiding the believing soul to the sufferings and death of the Saviour, and keeping it firmly there. But this rests in the nature of the matter of which we are treating;—the principal means by which the spirit of God works on us and in us is our conscience. It is His principal and natural work to produce and maintain a right view of the greatness of our guilt, and a lively perception of it, and to make known to us the present condition of the conflict between spirit and flesh. Thus He always keeps alive in us a sense of the necessity for the forgiveness of our

sins, the necessity for the crucifixion of our flesh, and both of these necessarily lead us back under the Cross of Christ, where alone we find satisfaction for both.

The Lord, then, comes to us from without, and makes us feel, at every step on our way, the frailties and meanness of our earthly life, which more than all show us our imitation of Christ, as being in the form of a servant, as a bearing of His cross.

He, then, who follows these directions, given us by God in the Scripture, in our heart, and in our life, and directs his whole aim to Christ crucified, will find it assuredly well with him. Yes, there is indeed nothing of any importance in the whole of this earthly life but that we should learn to believe on Him, and thus to be fashioned according to His likeness.

He who believes in Christ crucified has, through this, everything which serves here for the divine life and walk, and just in the form in which he wants it here, and under which alone he could use it here without danger.

II. Above all things this must be clear to us, that Jesus Christ the crucified One is, and must naturally be, the chief object and centre of all gospel teaching and faith, and that we cannot avoid this point, either in the preaching of the gospel, or, generally, in the whole Christian life, however repulsive this matter may be to the pampered taste of most men. We cannot annually assign it for the whole year to Lent. We must now learn to reconcile ourselves to it.

Partly by this means, partly by the truth set forth generally in the first part, the Christian life seems to assume a gloomy, melancholy, and sombre hue; but it really only appears so. On the contrary, our text, in reference to this, speaks of an accepted time. And so it is. Jesus Christ the crucified is the highest and the only light of joy in this land of shadows. Jesus Christ the crucified is nothing else than a reflection of the highest love and mercy of God. If this beams through our whole life, as its proper light, if this is constantly held before our faith, what could we desire more lovely?

But the Christian's whole earthly life certainly acquires an earnest character in the light of this truth.

1. In the first place, we must have Christ crucified always before our eyes; therefore, we cannot lightly jest and trifle though life, but have reason for more earnest thoughts. Yes, with this prospect continually before our eyes, life seems intended for something quite different from mere enjoyment; it appears then as the time which passes quickly, and yet must be redeemed if everything is not to be too late and the time lost for ever as a time of salvation, because it is

not intended for pleasure and trifling, but the winning again of a lost salvation for time and for eternity; as the time especially and exclusively allotted to us for that purpose; as a time when a real divine mercy is offered to us; yes, in which all things are divine mercy (Romans viii. 48), and when we may well examine and see that we have not received this grace in vain.

2. In the second place, if suffering is the only way of salvation which we have to pass through here, then we must certainly prepare to arm ourselves with a disposition for suffering, not to let the conflict seem strange to us; not to desire good days, but to learn to glory in tribulation.

Only in such a mind can the hope flourish which springs from faith which lives in the invisible world, and by the Spirit of God makes the promise of the eternal inheritance quite sure to itself, and which is such an indispensable support throughout the course of our life.

The special and chief virtues of the Christian during his earthly life will be just those which the Saviour exercised during the days of His sufferings. Calmness, silence, childlike obedience, and patience, —these are the things which are much more needed for this earthly life than the heroic virtues, for we are not called to deeds of heroism in this world, but to suffering, endurance, cross-bearing. Therefore, the Apostle tells us to look 'unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame' (Hebrews xii. 2). R. ROTHE.

## Fellow-Workers with God.

*We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* 2 CORINTHIANS vi. 2.

I. CONSIDER what the work of God is; and what it declares to us of the Great Worker! The works of Creation, of Redemption, of Sanctification, declare to us the existence and the operation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They bring us before God, not only revealed in His word, but manifest in His works around us and within us. They lead us to the lesson taught us by the outspread page of learning, and bring us to compare that lesson with the teaching of the page of revelation; till the sea and sky, and flood and mountain, the seasons' order and the wants of men, the outward voice of harmony and beauty, and the very fact of existence, lead us to listen with attentive ear to what Psalmist sung, or Evangelist revealed, or Apostle taught, and to weigh the statements from one end of the Bible to the other, and find them at least

consistent as a whole, all testifying to, and confirming, what we read this morning, that 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'; that He said, 'Let there be,' and 'it was so.'

It is with the Almighty, the All-knowing, the All-loving, the All-true God, that we, to use S. Paul's words, are 'fellow-workers.'

II. But how? and where? Not of course in the literal creation, or in the providence of the world. There God reigns alone. There Christ alone can say, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Nor yet in the world of politics. With civic honours and imperial state, reflections though they be of the one great Power from which alone they receive their force, we of the ministry have no call to entangle ourselves. 'But the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel'; the work for which He employs man, and in which He lets man be a fellow-worker with Himself, 'is the work of man's culture; it is wrought in the Church of His redeemed, and the living energies of His redeemed are the workmen therein.' Therefore it is that S. Paul in another place, using the same strong language as in the text, applies it as we here affirm; weaving it in with the other great metaphor, so as to show the two sides of the Christian minister's work: the building up, where the subject is passive, to show that all comes from God; the culture and the growth, which show there is a something, even in the disciple, which has life, and which must respond to the care bestowed upon it. 'We are labourers with God,' he says; 'ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.' Here, in the vineyard of the Church of God; here, in that spiritual temple which is the whole body of the redeemed, in which each soul is a microcosm of the whole, each single living stone itself a shrine of awful sanctity, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost; amidst these is our work.

The work of the ministry—let me say it with all humility, and in the way which S. Paul indicates—is a fellow-working with God, to carry out His ends in regard to man, and reflects the threefold working of the Blessed and mysterious Trinity.

III. As fellow-workers with God, what a title is yours, what dignity is yours! God who made souls, God who redeemed souls, God who sanctifies souls, places you side by side with Himself, face to face with the work of caring for souls. As receiving the grace of God, what power is yours! not power in the sense of being 'lords over God's heritage,' but power to be like Christ: power to work, power to suffer, power to be cheerful and still to persevere under failure, disappointment, and distress.

The grace of God is yours to-day: yours with all holy love: yours with pleading power in your own souls, weaning you from the evil, strengthening you in the good: yours with all gentle influence and

all prayerful promptings, with all holy hope and all assuring promise, for this life and the life to come: all help to yourselves, all blessing to others. God's ministers of old could use this language; they could speak of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Jesus Christ.' May you, may each one of us, not now only, but through life, be able to answer, 'Whereunto I also labour, according to His working which worketh in me mightily.'

G. C. HARRIS.

## III OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

### Temptation.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.*
S. MATTHEW iv. 1.

FOR forty days and nights the Saviour fasted in the desert. He was there alone; alone (S. Mark says) 'with the wild beasts.' Oh, what communings must have been His! what prayers and watchings, what sorrows and griefs borne for us in the contemplation of our fall and of our misery, of redemption to be bought by blood, and yet at last to be rejected and spurned by millions of the redeemed! We know not: we cannot fathom these depths: we can only look after Him into that thick darkness, and gaze upon his solitude through those six weeks with distant yet admiring awe. Doubt not that one integral part of His whole earthly suffering was that fearful sojourn, among wild beasts and fiercer spirits, in the wilderness into which He was 'led up,' a willing sacrifice, to be tempted of the devil.

I. At the end of His long fast He hungered. The moment came, when bodily exhaustion, less felt hitherto amidst the exercises of the spirit, made itself noticed as a special suffering. This was the prelude to the first act of the temptation.

Hunger is always a stern discipline; and the devil knows how to use it as a sore temptation. Many a man has been made a thief by hunger: 'when he was an hungred, the tempter came to him,' and he fell. For our Lord the subtle enemy laid a more suitable snare. 'If thou be the Son of God,' he said, 'command that these stones,' strewing everywhere the wilderness around Thee, 'be made bread' to satisfy Thy cruel need. Use Thy Godhead—put forth Thy Almighty

hand—first of all for Thyself: if the Redeemer Himself is to perish of hunger here in the wilderness, what shall become of His redemption, what of His redeemed? Thou that savest others, at least save Thyself! Let it not be said that the Son of God was unequal to his first and smallest task—that of just preserving Himself from a premature and needless end!

The first temptation came through the body. It addressed itself to an exhausted frame, and said, Put forth thy hand and rid thyself of this suffering. It had been idle to propose to the holy Saviour any deed of sinful self-indulgence: but this was a snare such as might have 'deceived the very elect': it said only, Do that which will be a proof of Thy mission, and in doing it relieve a craving which has not in it the nature of sin. The Saviour repelled even this. He said, I will not represent the body as of such value that it must be kept alive by the selfish exercise of the powers of a Messiahship: God will provide: bread, or manna, or any word that proceeds out of His mouth —any means which He is pleased to employ in behalf of His Son and Servant below—shall suffice Me: I will wait for Him, I will trust Him!

II. Very different (in form at least) was the second temptation. 'Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.'

The pinnacle of the temple was probably that edge or fringe of the chief portico of the building which hung over the valley of Kedron, and from which the eye would look down a dizzy precipice which no son of man could descend and live. Let the Saviour fling Himself from that eminence, trusting in the promised, the predicted protection of God Himself, and He would indeed prove His claim for ever to the glories of the Messiah and the Redeemer: no tongue could be moved against Him, and He would be borne in easy triumph to His crown and to His throne.

Thus the second temptation was addressed to that part of our nature through which we communicate with God Himself.

Many men trifle with health: they eat and drink to excess, they neglect sleep, they transgress every rule of prudence, and say in their hearts, 'I shall never suffer for it.' Many men trifle with their character: they go to the very verge of sin, they give occasion to suspicion and to obloquy, and they take no pains whatever to 'provide things honest in the sight of men,' and say in their hearts, 'I am above suspicion—no one will dare to cast a stone at me—I shall never be thrown down.' And many men trifle with evil: they go again and

again to that place, into that company, which they have often before found to be full of temptation: they trust to their good resolutions, a thousand times made and broken; they trust to their knowledge, to their experience of the peril; they trust to their very prayers, made just before they set forth in quest of danger; and say, God will preserve me: I am not going to sin: I know better—I mean better: there shall no harm happen to me. All these, in their several ways, need the lesson of our Lord's second temptation; need, above all, His own strong and all-wise answer, 'It is written again, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God.'

III. Foiled twice before, the devil seeks one last resource. He addresses himself to the soul; to the third element of man's being—the natural mind, with its faculties, desires, and aspirations, in reference to the things that are seen and the life that is.

'The prince of this world,' pointing from a high mountain, eastward and westward and northward and southward, indicates to the harassed and wearied Saviour, in this closing scene of His great temptation, the various regions of the world which He came to redeem, and offers to make all His, on one condition. Let Him only recognise the sovereignty of His benefactor; let Him only do homage for His ample domain to the enemy and usurper who bestows it: and all shall be His. No more of weariness and painfulness; no more of toil and conflict, of warfare with evil, of patient wrestling with souls refusing redemption, of gradual hard-won victories and frequent disheartening defeats; no 'contradictions of sinners,' no despite and contempt, no Gethsemane and no Calvary, no Cross and Passion, no sepulchre and Hades: all shall be gained by one concession: one bending of the knee to Satan shall supersede the necessity of redemption, and save whole centuries of misery, crime, and ruin. Such is the offer. Satan himself will make common cause with Christ, and the devils shall be cast out for ever 'through Beelzebub the prince of the devils.'

To do evil that good may come; to do homage to the devil for Christ's kingdom; to avert suffering, shame, or loss, by placing another, even for a moment, in the throne of God; this must never be: this is treason to truth, to right, to duty, to God. A redemption so purchased would have been none. Rather would it have been the sealing, crowning victory of evil; hopelessly and fatally entangling human destinies in a net of confusion, deception, and mockery. To worship God alone is the first principle, the chief duty, of man. If the world itself could be bought—if the devil himself could be bought off—by such a compromise, the result could only be a fatal riveting of the very fetters which it vainly offered to remove.

I add two remarks.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

1. The temptation of our Lord was a *complete* temptation. It addressed itself to each part of man's being.

2. The temptation of our Lord was a searching temptation. Each kind of temptation assailed Him in its most elevated, most refined, and most sublimed form. And he who looks to Christ for victory over evil passion, over selfish vanity, over sinful presumption, looks to One who first conquered, in Himself, much more than any of these; even that most subtle, most spiritual form of evil, which has intensified its strength by refining away its grossness.

DEAN VAUGHAN.

## Christ the Strength of the Tempted.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.* S. MATTHEW iv. 1.

*For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.* HEBREWS ii. 18.

I. WE all believe that God guides human life. We believe that His Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth. Now therefore I bid you notice how He is still carrying on, in the case of each one of us, a process of temptation, though it be a far less severe process than that which He applied to the father of the faithful. Yes, we are all being tempted of God every day. That is, not a day passes in which God Himself is not making trial of us, what manner of spirit we are of. He needs not to ascertain this, but we need it. He sees in the spring of motive, at the fountain-head of will, that which we can only see in the course of movement, in the stream of conduct. And it is quite necessary that we should be shown this; that we should be taught, each one for himself, what he is, how far he is really serving Christ and pleasing God, and how far, amidst whatever professions, he is really serving himself and pleasing men.

But I need not say that there is another application, perhaps a commoner, certainly a yet more grave one, of the word temptation. God tempts, or tries, us for our good. Even the bitter truths which we learn from His tempting are salutary. But there is another power, yes, let me say, another person, at work upon us besides Him. 'God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man: bnt every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed: then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' This is the brief description of that other process of temptation, which is not from

God, but from God's enemy, and which is not designed for wholesome discipline, but for injury, sin, and death.

Such, then, is human life. A time of trial in all its aspects; in its joys and in its sorrows, its prosperities and its adversities, its days of gloom and its days of brightness. A time, too, in one aspect, not of trial only but of temptation; of efforts directed against our present and eventual good, sometimes from without, in the shape of human solicitation; sometimes from within, in the shape of sinful suggestion, using the natural desires as its engines of attack, but adapting itself, by design and purpose, to the special openings afforded by situation, occasion, and circumstance.

II. But we turn now, gladly and thankfully, to the other side of this dark picture. We are not left alone. There is another Person too in sight. There is one of whom the latter text reminds us, who, being from eternity one with the Father, yet for us men, and for our salvation, became Himself Man, and this in order that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; might deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage; might become a merciful and faithful High Priest between God and man, to make reconciliation for sin; and finally, having Himself suffered under temptation, might be able, in all time to come, from His place at the right hand of God, to aid and to succour them that are tempted. We have to think, not of temptation only, but of Christ made through temptation the strength of the tempted.

How is Christ the strength of the tempted? Tell over in your minds the various items, so to speak, of His gracious help.

1. Think of His counsel. What wise directions He gives us in His word as to the way in which we should walk!

2. But counsel alone, advice alone, even inducements alone, may fail of their object. Therefore Christ is the strength of the tempted in this way also: that He has given us His own example.

3. Again, Christ is the strength of the tempted through His Providence for them that trust in Him. 'All power is given unto Me,' He says, 'in heaven and in earth'; in the spiritual as well as the temporal affairs of His creatures, in the arranging of their circumstances as well as the influencing of their minds.

4. And Christ is the strength of the tempted, once more, in this sense: that He ministers to them His Spirit.

5. 'In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.' Yes, the sympathy of Christ; that sort of sympathy which alone is worthy of the name, the sympathy of experience, the fellow-feeling, the community of feeling, which results from having borne the same; that sympathy which was made

possible for Him only by His becoming man, man in every part of man's nature, man in bodily wants and appetites, man in the capacity of being solicited to evil, man in the necessity of choosing between right and wrong, between self-gratification and obedience; it is this sympathy, acquired, in great part, in His longest and sorest temptation commemorated at this season, but for the exercise of which the whole of His earthly life was one continued preparation: this it is which, more than any one thing, makes Christ Himself, Christ personally, the help and the strength of tempted man.

(*a*) Do not confuse the two things, temptation and sin. It is no sin to be tempted. Christ Himself was led up by the Holy Spirit Himself into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And yet He knew no sin. 'In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Sin begins, not where temptation begins, but where temptation often ends—with the yielding to it.

(*b*) If you would have Christ for your strength when you are tempted, you must not wait to seek Him till temptation comes. You must live in Him always. 'Put on beforehand the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' DEAN VAUGHAN.

## The Bread of Life.

*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* S. MATTHEW iv. 4.

I. 'MAN doth not live by bread alone.' Thank God for that! If we did, what a transient and wretched mockery would life be! It would be like that object to which the old Saxon chief compared it, as a swallow in the winter's night scudding into the stormy darkness through a lighted hall; and, if we lived by bread alone, and if death and the grave were the end of it, what a feeble and ghastly procession mankind itself would be, the laughing-stock of angels, stopping for one moment between two eternities, going from a barren wilderness to a forgotten grave! The king builds his pyramids: they last, he is forgotten. The youthful beauty flashes in her jewels: they shall gleam on another long years after the fair brow which they encircle has crumbled into a grinning skull. The miser hoards his gold, and when the voice of God crashes through the midnight with its message, 'Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee,'—when that sound crashes upon his insensate soul, how much of his money will he be able to take with him? Will there be any pockets in his shroud? The youth madly snatches at

the Dead Sea apples of pleasure, or at the foam-wreath of reputation; how long will it be ere he has been poisoned by that forbidden fruit, or ere that sea of allurement drowns him in its crawling foam? If this were all, better never to have animated the dust which shall return to dust, nor to have nurtured in bread alone the thing which should become the heir of corruption, brother and sister to the worm.

But, thank God, I say again, 'Man doth not live by bread alone.' The needs of his body are the least essential of his needs: his mind, his heart, his soul, his spirit, these too, if he is to be a man at all, must live and grow, for in these are the unquenchable sparks which shall burn even in his ashes, and shall spring up eternal, immortal, incorruptible from the indignity of his grave. Even if a man die for lack of bread, still, if in the meantime he has been seeking for and feeding on the heavenly food, he does but die for a moment to live for evermore; death hath no dominion over him, because Christ has conquered it. The perishing of his body—'the body of his humiliation'—is but the beginning of an existence more divine. It is well with him in suffering, though he face man's fate; how should he die, seeing that death hath no part in him any more? He has bought his eternity with a little hour; he is not dead. We do not live by bread alone.

II. By what then do we live—we, our true selves? Christ tells us: 'By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' by the presence of God, by communion with God, by prayer to God, by the Sacraments of God, by the whisper of God's voice within us, by the truths which He has revealed to the souls of our fellow-men in every Scripture which, being given by Him, is profitable for instruction in righteousness. These are the food of every soul which is not beginning, even in this life, to enter into an eternal death. We must not think that by the word of God is meant only the Bible. That would be a most narrow misinterpretation. We live by every word, whether in Scripture, or anywhere, 'which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' There is a single line full of meaning by the great Christian poet and thinker Wordsworth, which, rightly understood, furnishes a beautiful and pregnant comment upon this text:

'We live by admiration, hope, and love.'

'We live,' he says, 'by admiration.' Admiration—that is, the yearning of man for something outside himself, higher than himself, better than himself—is the beginning of all noble thought, the basis of all science, of all civilisation, of all worship, of all inspiring effort.

Again, we live by hope. Hope, too, is a word of God spoken to man's heart, which man especially needs. There is much about us,

and most of all in our own hearts, to make man despair. In his own heart how deceitful it often seems, above all things, and desperately wicked! and without him, as he looks at the evidence of insane religion, merciless war, sullen, dull, detestable pleasure, vain and vile sloth, in which the nations of the world have too much lived, he may feel at times almost tempted to say, with the despairing moralist, that the race itself seems to be half-serpent still, not extricated from its clay, the glory of it emaciated with cruel hunger, armed with venomous sting, and the track of it on the leaf of glittering slime, and in the sand a useless furrow. At least, he may be often tempted to cry, with the despairing king of the Idylls—

> 'I saw God in the shining of His stars,
> I found Him in the flow'ring of His fields,
> But in His ways with men I found Him not.

Nevertheless the Christian hears the sweet voice which bids him hope. Despair, even in ordinary human life, would be mere torpor and paralysis. 'We are saved,' says S. Paul, 'by hope.' Except in hope no good has ever been done. 'It was hope,' says one, 'that hung the lantern upon the ship of Columbus, it was hope that taught the blind and persecuted Milton the doings of Paradise, it was hope that kindled the torch before Bacon as he descended into the laboratory of nature, it was hope that supported the soul of Newton amid the dim worlds unknown, it was hope that scattered the Persian chivalry before the Athenians at Marathon'; and in the spiritual life Christian happiness is folded in the bosom of Hope. How badly shall we fare, tossed to and fro on this sick sea, without that 'hope that maketh not ashamed,' that 'hope which is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast and reaching within the veil'! Without hope how would life be better than a dance of fire-flies beginning and ending in the summer twilight under the forest trees? But, thank God, we can live, because He has given us a hope full of immortality. In the Achor valley of misery He has opened for us, even at the end of it, a door of hope. His voices abound in precious promises; they come to us like perfume amid the miseries of life,—in the voices of children, in the gladness of happy homes, in baptismal blessings, amid the sound of marriage bells; and they even mingle, those memories of hope, in the night of tribulation, amid the sobs of the afflicted and the tears of the bereaved. The words of God are rich with eternal hope. The message of His Book is essentially a message of sweet and sure and abounding hope. Life without hope pours nectar in a sieve, and hope without an object cannot live; but life in Christ is a life of hope, and the object of that hope is what 'eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.'

One word more. We live by admiration, hope, and love. By human love, by the beautiful affections of pity and friendship, by the enthusiasm of men for the good of others, by the service of humanity, by the tender sympathies of home—by human love, the sweet, sweet love of mother, of sister, or of wife; love for the tender and trustful innocence of childhood, for the brightness of youth, for the calm strength of manhood, for the peaceful wisdom of old age—by human love we live, and the loveless soul is twice dead. But how much more, in the highest regions of our being, by divine love! The love of Christ not only constrains, but supports us. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God'; and such we are. 'We love Him because He first loved us.' When all else seemed to pale, how many of God's highest saints have lived in this sustaining love! It was the moral of the story of the despairing Elijah, when the angel touched him in the wilderness, saying, 'Rise and eat,' and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights; it is the moral of Moses on Sinai, when the Jewish legend said that for forty days he was sustained without food by the music of the spheres—in other words, his spirit was sustained by words that proceeded out of the mouth of God; it was the moral of our Lord's forty days, when the Spirit led Him into the wilderness; it was what He meant when He said to His disciples, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' They, in crude amazement, asked one another, 'Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?' and Jesus said, 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.' It is part of what He meant when He taught us to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread,'—*τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον*—bread alike for our human and our divine sustenance. 'If any man eat this bread he shall live for ever.' 'Lord, evermore give us this bread'; yea, and we know that Thou wilt give it, and dost give it to all who come, in repentance and faith, to Thy holy table. 'Take, eat, this is My Body which is given for you.' 'Drink ye all of it, for this is My Blood of the New Testament which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins.' 'Lord, evermore give us this bread,' yea, give us Thyself, for Thy word is bread indeed and drink indeed.

DEAN FARRAR.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

## Bread and Word.

*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* S. MATTHEW iv. 4.

THERE is a great sentence that meets us at the beginning of Lent. I scarcely know that we could find elsewhere, in or out of the Bible, another short phrase that shapes like this, in large, bold outline of language, the whole secret of life. Man—bread—life—God—they are the words round which all the deep concerns of humanity move. Man stands between bread and God, bread beneath him and God above him, and he has to master his relation to each.

Lent meets us and invites us at the outset to inquire carefully and humbly what our principles are on this breadward side of life, if I may so phrase it. What principles of indulgence or abstinence have we acted on in the past, or do we propose to act on in the future? Each one will have to carry the principles he grasps into all kinds of important details. He must make his rule of life, which is sure to be and ought to be different in each individual. The imitation of Christ, as has been well said, is not necessarily a direct copying of Him. The Bible furnishes principles of conduct, not details. And our Church is as generous and large in her principles as the Bible. She does not construct for her children any nicely adjusted dietary. But she certainly suggests attention and discipline in this region. She proposes days of fasting and abstinence, she bids us pray to God 'that we may use such abstinence that we may obey His godly motions,' that we may be free to respond to His voice and touch and leading. And three broad principles of abstinence seem to be given us in this first and lowest temptation which the Lord experienced.

I. The main business of man's life is not to get bread for himself. What a simple platitude it sounds! But then the principles of a right life are simple and direct. Christ's life was superbly simple, because it was a life of perfect principle: 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God.' To do God's will, to manifest it to men, who know it not, who cannot by themselves fulfil it—such is the work for which He is endowed with the Spirit's force; this is the mission—this is the purpose and passion of His heart. Then at the very outset He must clear it definitely from all lower aims and side issues. He must prove to Himself and to others by the experience of action and life what it is not. It is not to alter nor to ease the hard conditions and circumstances of the world for Himself. The world has its waste,

lonely places—its wilderness, where the rough stones lie about, where men fall and fail and faint and bleed. And He has come to

'Find out men's wants and wills and meet them there.'

And so this voluntary fast brings Him by a definite act of will into touch and sympathy with these hard conditions. It is indeed only a negative preparation for this work. It does not reveal what His mission is, in what way He will use His gift. But, at any rate, it keeps it intact, free from misinterpretation and misuse.

Certainly His touch even of outward things must now and again transform and beautify. The pressure of His sacred feet must make the water gush out and streams flow in the desert. He is going to minister to the world's needs of every kind. But the first thing He does is to feel them, to assimilate Himself to the sorrow as it is. He acquaints Himself with grief. He looks round about upon all things, and sees what they are like, and gets into close contact with the rough ugly state of things which man's sin has brought about. To use His power in making a charmed circle round Himself, and putting all that was harsh and unlovely at distance from Him, would be at the outset a fatal mistake.

Now surely here we have a root-principle of fasting. Here is a secret of true asceticism. We have our gifts, our endowments, material, intellectual, spiritual, which certainly put us at an advantage compared with other men. Short of a deliberate and base prostitution of them, are we quite clear that we are using them simply and purely? The world for us is not quite a 'waste howling wilderness.' It is very trim, and smooth, and comfortable, and cultured. We have bread enough and to spare. The more need then for us to ask, in searching honesty, Is our main motive clear and unconfused in the midst of it all? Have we been—half-unconsciously perhaps—helping ourselves a little freely out of the store which was given us for other purposes? We cannot be quite sure until we make some definite test. We have to disentangle ourselves a bit from the pleasant surroundings which grow up round us, we hardly know how or when. We protest to ourselves that they are only accidents, mere subordinate accessories of life, these dainties, this pleasant society, this cultured ease, all that is soft to the touch and satisfying to the taste. But are we quite sure of this? Are these accidents really becoming essential? Are they for us practically the main thing? Are they absorbing, prominent, indispensable? If they go, what is left? What richness and joy in life?

True, indeed, the abstinence has no value in itself for its own sake. We watch the Lord moving from the temptation into His ministry through scenes of social life, 'familiar, condescending,

patient, free,' eating and drinking, exposing Himself by His social freedom to coarse and contemptuous reproach, sitting down at feasts, asking for refreshment when he needed it, making from the Cross that last appeal to human pity, 'I thirst.'

> 'Not sullen or in scorn, like haughty man
> With suicidal hand,
> Putting his solace by.'

His way of partaking of bread, as well as His abstinence, only reveals more clearly the temper of the Christian fast. We are not asked to concentrate our aims upon some prodigious feat of fasting, as if life and abstinence were synonymous terms. No, indeed. Life is a higher and grander and fuller thing than any such negative action. But we are asked to move as Christ moved, with clear and constant purpose, along the levels of life, taking the world as we find it, not seeking to be saved from its roughnesses and hardships, but welcoming them, not because stones are in themselves lovely and desirable but because they are tokens that we are

> 'Not left in God's contempt apart,
> With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
> Tame in earth's paddock as her prize,'

but that we are in close fellowship with life's rough realities.

II. But how does all this affect our relation to others? What principles of conduct to them does it supply to us?

Well, first, it is simple to observe that it was Christ's first anxiety to find for others the bread that He was careless to find for Himself. Fasting and almsgiving: yes, they are sister duties that cannot thrive apart. 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?' So His fast had not hardened Him into any austere indifference to the hungry bodies of His fellow-men. No, none can be so generous-hearted to the poor as the poor themselves. They understand the need without an effort. And we may well measure the value of our abstinence by the increased tenderness and generosity which it evokes in feeling and action. And the first and simplest form that the generosity must take is in the exhibition of corporal acts of mercy. 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?' How well we know the cry! This is the trouble which lies hard upon us to-day. Nothing is concealed from us of the world's distress. No one can share to-day the pathetic ignorance of the French Queen, who, if the story is true, when she was told that her people wanted bread, asked why they could not have cake. Still the less can we be capable of the horrible hardness of her minister, who suggested that the starving populace should eat straw. No, we know it all, and feel it all. But

the Christian is to see in the bodily distress of the poor a perpetuation of that appeal of His, 'proving' us by His demand, 'Whence shall we buy bread?' The Christian Church is sometimes mockingly accused of offering 'spiritual consolations' to starving stomachs. Is the accusation a libel or a truth? The pages of Christian history and the lives of Christian men and women must answer the question. Yet, *fas est et ab hoste doceri.* The wild shriek of the Socialists is a summons to us, not indeed to accept their principles or to indulge in their dreams, but to be touched more keenly with that vast pity which filled the heart of the Master as He moved up and down amidst the sorrow and sicknesses of His fellow-men.

III. Only He carries us, by His example and His precept, beyond the limits of philanthropy. The masses had their meal. But He had a higher aim for them than this. Of course He had. Life for them was to be lived on the same principles that He was manifesting in His own life. They had the loaves, and were filled. They only wanted more of the same thing. But how could He be willing for them to be satiated with the bread that He held so cheap for Himself?

That which was the goal of their desire was only the starting-point of His. He had only just begun His work with them when He had given them bread. He had just eased the hard pressure of hunger in order that they might be free to follow on and up to higher and more abiding blessings. Bread? Yes, but not bread alone. This was His sorrow, that His bounty had not brought the blessing to them which He designed. 'Ye seek me' (how sadly the words sound!) 'not because ye saw signs, not because ye caught the inner spiritual purpose of My earthly gift, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.' And at last from the lips of some there broke the utterance of a purer, loftier desire. 'Lord, evermore give us this bread—the abiding, living bread.' CANON CARTER.

## Our Lord's Temptation.

*Then the devil taketh Him up to the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* S. MATTHEW iv. 5-7.

THIS, which is the second temptation in S. Matthew, is, as you are aware, the third in S. Luke. It may be that the younger Evangelist, looking upon it as a temptation subtler and more perilous than any which could come from physical suffering or from

earthly splendour, regarded it as the last because it was the deadliest assault. But the fact that S. Matthew alone gives us definite notes of sequence, the fact that, as an actual Apostle, he is more likely to have heard the narrative from the lips of Christ Himself, the fact that the recorded words, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan,' seem to be the natural conclusion of the entire temptation, render it all but certain that the order of the actual temptation was that which the first Evangelist adopts.

Nor is this all; for there is also in this order an inherent fitness, a divine probability. It represents, on the part of the tempter, a Satanic subtlety of insight, which the acutest human intellect could hardly have invented. For our Saviour had foiled the first temptation by an expression of absolute trust in God. Not even the pangs of famine in the howling wilderness would tempt Him one step aside from the perfect confidence that His heavenly Father could, and in His own time would, prepare for Him a table in the wilderness. Adapting himself, therefore, with serpent cunning to this discovered mood of the Saviour's mind, breathing a suggestion which must seem but the natural sequel of that triumphant faith, the tempter challenges this perfect trust, not to gratify an immediate need, but apparently to avert an immediate peril. There is no stain of egotism, no impatience of suffering, in the present temptation. Transformed therein into an angel of light, the tempter breathed his insidious suggestion as a sublime victory of Messianic power, a striking illustration of sovereign faith. Transporting the Saviour to the Holy City, where

> 'The glorious temple reared
> His pile far off,—appearing like a mount
> Of alabaster, tipped with golden spires,'

the tempter set Him—not on *a*, but as it should be more accurately rendered, on *the*—on the topmost pinnacle. Probably it was the summit of that Stoa Basilikè, or Royal Porch, which towered over the southern extremity of the magnificent mass. At this point the walls of Jerusalem surmount a rocky and elevated platform; and as the porch itself was of stupendous height, we are told by the Jewish historian that no one could gaze down from it into the sheer descent of the ravine below without his brain growing giddy at the yawning depth of the abyss.

So deadly subtle, so speciously plausible, was this second temptation. There was nothing vulgar in it, nothing selfish, nothing sensuous. It seemed all spiritual; and to how many a Pharisee and reformer and saint have such and similar temptations proved a fatal snare! But calm, spontaneous, deep with warning, came the simple answer,

'It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!' The word in the original is yet stronger: Thou shalt not tempt to the full, thou shalt not challenge to the extreme, the Lord thy God; thou shalt not wantonly experiment upon the depth of His pity, or the infinitude of His power. When in the path of duty, then, trust Him to the uttermost with a perfect confidence; but let no seductive whisper thrust thee into suicidal irreverence in thy demand for aid. Thus, to add the words omitted by the tempter, shalt thou be safe in all thy ways.

I. Are we never liable to tempt the Lord our God, as Israel tempted Him in the wilderness, as Christ refused to tempt Him on the temple pinnacle? Yes, in many ways. Christ would not cast Himself down, because He respected, as the laws of His Father, the laws of nature; and to cast Himself down would have been to brave and violate them. Now, we too, by our knowledge of those laws, by study of them, by obedience to them, are placed as it were upon a pinnacle of the temple,—on a pinnacle of that vast Cathedral of the Omnipotent, whose azure dome is the vault of heaven, and the stars its cresset lamps. Consider the supremacy of man in nature. For us winds blow and waters roll; for us are the glorious voices of the mountain and the sea; for us the shell upon the sand has its rosy beauty, and the moon in heaven her silvery light. And look what man has done! How he has made the very elements minister to his happiness and decrease his toil, how he has, as it were, seized the very lightning by its wing of fire, and bidden it flash his messages through the heart of mighty mountains and the bosom of raging seas! But how? By exact obedience to the laws of nature, never by insolent violation of them. 'The water drowns ship and sailor like a grain of dust; but trim your bark, and the wave which drowned it will be cloven by it, and carry it like its own foam, a plume and a power.' But is there no moral lesson for us here? Ay, and a deep one; for the Book of Nature is also the Book of God, and the Voice of Nature the Voice of God; and the history of man and the life of man had been very different, if, instead of neglecting that book, being deaf to that voice, violating those laws, and so flinging himself down from that temple pinnacle whereon his feet are set, he had humbly and faithfully striven to understand and to obey. Half of the peace and prosperity of nations, half of the health and happiness of man, half even of the serenity and security of moral life, depend on this. It is related of one of the bravest of our kings—a king who, in many a hard fight, when horses were shot under him and bullets tore his clothes, exulted with a serene and imperturbable courage, that he had yet a deep contempt for foolhardiness and neglect. 'What do you do here?' he once asked sternly and angrily,

of a gentleman who had come to witness a battle. 'Do you not see the danger you are in?' 'Not in greater danger than your Majesty,' was the reply. 'Yes,' answered the king, 'but I am here in the path of duty, and therefore may trust my life in God's care; but you——' before the sentence could be finished a cannon-ball laid the rash intruder dead at the unharmed monarch's feet.

II. Again, by our spiritual and moral privileges, no less than by the laws of nature, we stand as it were upon the pinnacle of the temple. Consider our lofty privileges. We are, every one of us, members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. As long as we stand firm where His Providence hath set our feet we are secure. 'He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers; His righteousness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.' Daniel, when he prayed thrice a day looking towards Jerusalem, was but doing what he had ever done, and therefore for him the lions' mouths were sealed. The three children were but resisting unsought temptation, when they were dragged before the golden image, and flung into the burning flame, and therefore for them the Spirit of God breathed like 'a moist whistling wind' amid the fire. But, on the other hand, when the early Christians thrust themselves presumptuously and insolently into the peril of martyrdom, how often did 'the flaming inspirations of idealist valour' sink shamefully under the rude shock of reality! And the fall of many of them was more terribly shameful, when they put themselves with reckless self-confidence in the way of moral temptations. As long as men watch and pray, and use the ordinary means of safety furnished by God's grace, so long they are safe; but when they despise those ordinances, how utter may be their ruin! When Lot in his greed for gold was willing to exchange his nomad tent for the foul city's wicked streets, how in the shipwreck of all he had and all he loved, how in the earthquake-shattered city and the lightning-riven plain, how in the putrescent scum and glistening slime of that salt and bitter sea which rolled its bituminous horror where his garden pastures had smiled before,—how, I say, did he learn that God means even the most innocent-hearted to keep far away from sin! He who dallies with temptation, he who tampers with evil, is never safe. People say that such and such a man had a sudden fall; but no fall is sudden. In every instance the crisis of the moment is decided only by the tenor of the life; nor since this world began has any man been dragged ever into the domain of evil, who had not strayed carelessly, or gazed curiously, or lingered guiltily beside its verge.

III. Once more and lastly—and this is a point which nearly affects us all, independently of all spiritual privileges, independently of

# OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

God's inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ—we are set as it were upon a pinnacle of the temple, by the mere grandeur and loftiness of our being, by the freedom of our wills, by the immortality of our souls, by the glory and honour, a little lower than the angels, wherewith God has crowned our race. And how often, alas! and fearfully do men fling themselves down from this glory and grandeur into the abyss! For, indeed, by every sin, above all by every wilful, by every deliberate, by every habitual sin, we do fling ourselves from our high station down into shame and degradation, into guilt and fear, into fiery retribution, and it may be final loss. And yet, how many talk in these days as though to sin were no great harm, as though the sins of youth, for instance, were all venial, and it were rather a better thing than otherwise for a young man to sow, as they call it, his wild oats! But yet, though man deceive himself and be deceived—though, even ere it was promulgated, it was shattered to pieces on the mountain granite—the Moral Law remains in its eternal majesty, and in the heart and conscience of every living man louder than amid the thunder-echoing crags of Sinai, 'God spake these words and said.' So that every violation of God's law is to fling ourselves down from the temple pinnacle into the foul and dark ravine; it is to see whether man's insolent rebellion shall not triumph over God's immutable designs.

If Satan tempt us to cast ourselves down from that high pinnacle whereon we are now standing, whether it be by neglecting the law of nature, or by presuming on the law of grace, or by defying the law of retribution, we shall, if we yield to that temptation, be yielding to our own destruction. But to each of such temptations we have the true answer, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Trust Him, but tempt Him not. Trust Him, for thou art His child, and if thou wilt love and fear Him, the very hairs of thy head are all numbered. In the accidents of life, in its dangers, in its difficulties, in its moral crises, yea, in the very valley of the shadow of death, trust Him; but in obedience, not in rebellion; in faith, not in audacity; in humble patience, not in insolent self-will. So, but so only, shall He give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

DEAN FARRAR.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

## The Temptation in the Wilderness.

*Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.* S. MATTHEW iv. 10.

LOOK on this trial of our Lord in what I might call a theological or ecclesiastical light, and then in a general and personal, but a very true, way.

I. First, shortly notice the religious, or specially theological aspect of the temptation. Jesus had resented the proposals of the devil. He had resisted that which was to lead Him to spend His power as Son of God in the relief of His personal needs. He had refused to court the superstitious homage of the people by a display of supernatural immunity from bodily harm. But now something very different was suggested. In the words of our English Bible, 'He saw the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,' and was moved to claim their sympathy, or their subjection to His influence, by some procedure by which His own authority, or His own will, should be paramount. He saw, He was tempted to look at, some way by which to aggrandise Himself, by which, in the words of our English Bible, 'all should be His,' but when assailed by thoughts of independent dominion, the spirit of His last prayer comes up, 'Not My will, but Thine be done.' Did he yield to the spirit of self—the true devilish spirit—all might be His. But then what did He come for? He came to bring men to God. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring men to God. If He failed in that, if He now separated Himself from God, however successful He might seem to be, there would result a worship of humanity alone, the last Adam would be no better than the first, and men would have missed the message that God was a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Here, surely, is a deep lesson. There is no true worship of Christ separate from God; but we are ever tempted to divide the indivisible, we are tempted to separate the will of Christ from that of His Father, as if the Son might do for us what the Father would not; and we are tempted to make grosser mistakes, almost to invest the means of grace with individual influence, and to reckon them as instruments alone. There clings about us, indeed, something of the touch and perception of the savage, which lead him to fancy that the watch and the telescope, and the compass which the traveller consults, are gods. We are tempted, for instance, to look at prayer, and good books, and sacramental observances rather than through them; we are tempted to look to them, and to let our thoughts end in them rather than look beyond them. We dishonour them by using them

as ends and not as means. We have to strain against the most subtle temptations to decline the true worship of God, by taking up something which seems to make the business easier.

It is not so easy to worship God in spirit and in truth. There are many attractions, there are many and brilliant counter and diverting attractions in our simple approach to God. We may conceive of some kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, professing an allegiance to the Christ, and yet resting on something short of God Himself; but Christ says, 'Him only shalt thou serve,' and we have to do directly with Him in all our thoughts and words and acts. His spirit, Christ's spirit, God's spirit is not a cold and distant influence to be caught after toilsome and strenuous religious procedure, but it temples in us, abides with us in our going out and coming in; and any procedure or persuasion which dims this truth spoils our enjoyment of the work and message of Christ, who would have no power or worship separate from God. This is one religious or theological lesson which we may learn from the resistance of our Lord to the last and grandest of His temptations.

II. But that scene, that incident, that great event has a more general and at the same time personal application. When Jesus was tempted for the third time it was not, as we have seen, on the ground of His hunger, it was not on the ground of any supposed desire to exhibit His ability as the Son of God to escape or evade bodily harm. The tempter now seems to assume that He looked for triumph, for success, for acceptance, but that the end, the attainment of these things was, so to speak, veiled in Him. Now, we in our degree, though it may be in a small degree, are all of us, or many of us, charged with a desire to see the realisation of something or other which we have had in our mind, but the road towards which has not yet revealed itself. And I think we learn about our own condition here from the temptation of Jesus. We move indeed among mysteries when we talk about that temptation, but unless He suffered, being tempted, unless through likeness, through kinship between us and Him in that temptation, it has no meaning to us, but sinks down into an august but histrionic performance. No, when we think of Jesus being tempted by the offer of a magnificent fulfilment of His hopes, but not knowing how or when they should be realised, we are at once reminded of His own later saying: 'Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.' The course, the outcome of His mission was not yet made clear. That is agreeable indeed to what we are taught in the Scriptures, where we read: 'Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.' He had yet to experience the disappointment expressed in the words, 'O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not.' And now in some way He perceived a new opening for the securing of influence and power. A fresh method of success presented itself. He saw, He thought of, He beheld the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. A magnificent supremacy revealed itself. We cannot tell how. We now believe, and we say that it was not till He had 'overcome the sharpness of death' that He 'opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers,' and 'the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering.' The men of Israel trusted He would have redeemed Israel after some other fashion. At the first, when the Gospel of Christ hung, as it were, in the balance, there seemed to be some wide and royal road to the fulfilment of His aims clearer than that which His Father had prepared, other than that which God had prepared for Him, and one therefore which involved some distrust of Him—some turning aside from the path which He had entered. The temptation was to evade the old uncertainty, the temptation was to secure a result, to impregnate with His power all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, the temptation was to leave the shrouded path of simple submission to the Almighty will, no longer to wait for what that would reveal or bring, to grasp at once the reality of ownership or enjoyment. That is the point, surely, of the last temptation. We cannot tell more. The tempter showed Him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, 'All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

This is the last, the supreme assault of every soul, and on that great occasion the Father's legions in reserve, 'like soldiers, hid behind the hill ready for the call to come forth, await the answer, and it comes—the magnificent, the irresistible answer: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' 'Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels come and minister unto Him.' So it was with Jesus, and so it is with those who follow Jesus now. If we listen and yield, why then we feel the incoming of sorrow, then the tree to be desired to make one wise becomes the vehicle of shame, and the new-born beauty of the earth is seamed with the furrows of disappointment and toil. But, if we stand firm, like the earliest figure in the Bible, Job, who says, 'Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him'; if we stand firm and cling to the righteousness of God, the tempter leaves, and angels minister. It may be only for a season, but the same answer ever holds, for the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, is not turned or blunted by use. So we ever get assurance, as one trial after another meets us and is left behind us in our pilgrimage on the earth, for 'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.' CANON JONES.

# OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

## IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

### Jehovah-jireh.

*And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; that is, The Lord will provide.* GENESIS XXII. 14.

I. HESE words have become proverbial and threadbare as a commonplace of Christian feeling. But it may be worth our while to ask for a moment what it was exactly that Abraham expected the Lord to provide.

There is nothing in this life that we need so much as to do the will of our Father in Heaven. All outward wants are poor compared with that. The one thing worth living for, the one thing which being secured we are blessed, and being missed we are miserable, is compliance in heart with the commandment of our Father; and that compliance wrought out in life. So, of all gifts that He bestows upon us, and of all the abundant provision out of His rich storehouses, is not this the best, that we are made ready for the required service? When we get to the place we shall find some lamb 'caught in the thicket by its horns'; and Heaven itself will supply what is needful for our burnt-offering.

And then there is another thought here which, though we cannot certainly say it was in the speaker's mind, is distinctly in the historian's intention, 'The Lord will provide.' Provide what? The lamb for the burnt-offering which He has commanded. It seems probable that that bare mountain-top which Abraham saw from afar, and named Jehovah-jireh, was the mountain-top on which afterwards the Temple was built. And perhaps the wood was piled for the altar, on which Abraham was called to lay his only son, on that very piece of primitive rock which still stands visible, though Temple and altar have long since gone; and which for many a day was the place of the altar on which the sacrifices of Israel were offered. It is no mere forcing of Christian meanings on to old stories, but the discerning of that prophetic and spiritual element which God has impressed upon these histories of the past, especially in all their climaxes and crises, when we see in the fact that God provided the ram which became the appointed sacrifice, through which Isaac's life was preserved, a dim adumbration of the great truth, that the only Sacrifice which God accepts for the world's sin is the Sacrifice which He Himself has provided.

II. Note again on what conditions He provides.

The incident and the name became the occasion of a proverb, as the historian tells us, which survived down to the period of his writing, and probably long after, when men were accustomed to say, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.' The provision of all sorts that we need has certain conditions as to the when and the where of the persons to whom it shall be granted. 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.' If we want to get our outward needs supplied, our outward weaknesses strengthened, power and energy sufficient for duty, wisdom for perplexity, a share in the Sacrifice which taketh away the sins of the world, we get them all on the condition that we are found in the place where all the provision is treasured.

Get near to God if you would partake of what He has prepared. Live in fellowship with Him by simple love, and often meditate on Him, if you would drink in of His fulness. And be sure of this, that howsoever within His house the stores are heaped and the treasury full, you will have neither part nor lot in the matter, unless you are children of the house. 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.' And round it there is a waste wilderness of famine and of death.

III. And so, lastly, note what we are to do with the provision when we get it.

Abraham christened the anonymous mountain-top, not by a name that reminded him or others of his trial, but by a name that proclaimed God's deliverance. He did not say anything about his agony or about his obedience. God spoke about that, not Abraham. He did not want these to be remembered, but what he desired to hand on to later generations was what God had done for him. Is that the way in which we look back upon life? Many a bare, bald mountain-top in your career and mine we have got our names for. Are they names that commemorate our sufferings or God's blessings? When we look back on the past, what do we see? Times of trial or times of deliverance? Which side of the wave do we chose to look at, the one that is smitten by the sunshine or the one that is all black and purple in the shadow? The sea on the one side will be all a sunny path, and on the other dark as chaos. Let us name the heights that lie behind us, visible to memory, by names that commemorate, not the troubles that we had on them, but the deliverances that on them we received from God.

As we look back upon our past lives, and see many a peak gleaming in the magic light of memory, let us name them all by names that will throw a radiance of hope on the unknown and unclimbed difficulties before us, and say, as the Patriarch did when he went down from the mount of his trial and deliverance, 'The Lord will provide.'

A. MACLAREN.

# OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

## V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

### God's Presence in Loneliness.

*Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.* HOSEA ii. 14.

I. FROM the first dawning of conversion to the hour of death, it is in solitude mostly that God speaks to the soul. 'Let us search the Scriptures,' says a holy inward writer, 'and we shall find that scarce ever, or never, did God speak in a multitude; but so often as He would have anything known to men, He showed Himself, not to nations or peoples but either to single persons, or very few, of those severed from the common throng of men, either in the silence of the night, in the fields, or in deserts, in mountains or in valleys. So spake He with Noah, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Moses, David, and Samuel, and all the prophets.' But why speak of man? Was not our Lord, as at this time, for forty days alone with the wild beasts, in fasting and prayer, tempted by Satan, at once to teach us that in solitude also does Satan tempt, and yet that loneliness is the presence of God, and the armour of victory? Ye know how alone He passed the night in prayer before He chose His disciples; to the disciples alone He manifested His glory, and 'revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God'; alone He prayed in His agony and bloody sweat. But these, ye may say, were holy men, and God become Man. Yet for us, not for Himself, did our Lord choose loneliness; to hallow it for us, and teach us to love it, because He loved it, and to support us in it, as being the more with Him. And what was needful for those blessed firstfruits of His redeemed, 'His friends,' how should it not be for us sinners?

II. Blessed are those holy hours in which the soul retires from the world, to be alone with God. God's voice, as Himself, is everywhere. Within and without He speaks to our souls, if we would hear. Only the din of the world, or the tumult of our own hearts, deafens our inward ear to it. Stillness is as His very presence, for, like the prayer from the prophet's servant, it opens our senses to perceive what was there to behold, only our eyes were holden. 'There is neither speech nor language; the voice is not heard'; but 'day unto day uttereth speech' to hearts that hearken, 'and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' All God's works, because He has made

them, bear the traces of His hand, and speak of Him to the soul which is alone with Him. All works of man, directed or overruled by His Providence, every thing, good or bad, speaks of His presence or His absence. But chiefly in the inmost soul He speaks, because there He dwells. The restless love of amusement, society, outward excitement, even reading, besides any object for itself, has mainly this, to escape being alone with its own thoughts, because there it will find God. Dull often, and weary, will the employment be, but, like the clay used by savages to dull the pain of hunger, it stifles in the soul the sense of the presence of Him, whose love it knows not. And therefore does God so often create in the soul a still more awful loneliness, rending from it that on which its very being hung, that at length it may learn to live alone with God, when all it loved with God is withdrawn from sight. Then, in those sacred solemn hours if these too it wastes not, it learns to love and to be with Him, whom 'none loseth but who leaveth,' that only 'place of rest imperturbable where love is not forsaken, if itself forsaketh not.'

III. Until, in silence, ye enter into that sacred loneliness, ye know not whither ye are going. In loneliness a man knows himself and his God. Enter there with Him, and by His grace thou wilt not come forth as thou goest in. As thou wouldest not, in a tempest, be tossed about without compass, neither sun nor stars appearing; so trust thyself no longer to the sea of this troublesome world, not knowing whether thou art indeed, year by year, reaching nearer towards the haven where thou wouldest be. As thou wouldest not leave thy worldly affairs unexamined, lest they go to ruin, be as faithful with thy soul. If thou hast not yet, review once, under the eye of God, thy life as a whole, and see whither it has been, and is tending. Bear, in the presence of God, to know thyself. Then seek to know for what God sent thee into the world; how thou hast fulfilled it; art thou yet what God willed thee to be; what yet lacketh unto thee; what is God's will for thee now; what chiefly hinders thee from inward peace; what one thing thou mayest now do, by His grace to obtain His favour, and approve thyself unto Him. Say to Him, 'Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God,' and He will say unto thy soul, 'Fear not; I am thy salvation.' He will speak peace unto thy soul; He will set thee in the way; He will speak to thy soul 'good words and comfortable words'; He will bear thee above things of sense and praise of man, and things which perish in thy grasp, and give thee, if but afar off, some glimpse of His own unfading, unsetting, unperishing, brightness, and bliss, and love. Only by His grace take with thee one earnest purpose, to desire to know the will of God for thee, and to do it.

E. B. PUSEY.

# OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

## Temptation.

*And lead us not into temptation.* S. MATTHEW vi. 13.

THESE words are very familiar to us. If we call ourselves Christians, these words pass our lips every day of our lives. Nay, if we are living true Christian lives in any sense, it will not be only once a day that we say these words; for these words, as you know, are part of a prayer which the Lord Himself told us to use—'Lead us not into temptation.'

This prayer we offer up every day of our lives. Now will you consider what is meant by praying to God? We pray to God—if we really are praying, we ask Him to do something we wish to be done. It is not prayer to kneel down and ask God to give you what you do not want to have. If you do not really desire it, then your prayers are mere words. They are not true prayers at all. If you are really praying, you will be in downright earnest in the matter, and you will honestly desire that what you pray for shall be done. That, I should say, was clear to anybody.

I. But that leads me a step further. If we really mean this, is it not perfectly clear that we shall not thwart it ourselves? For a man to ask God not to lead him into temptation, and then presently to walk into temptation, surely that is mocking the prayer that he offers. He prays to God not to take him there; and then, of his own free will, he walks into the very place! Is that consistent? Is it possible that a man, whose conduct shows that he is not in earnest at all, can be considered as offering real prayer? And therefore it is that we can see quite plainly that when our Lord bade us pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' He meant us to understand that we were not to go into temptation. And that is the special mark of a Christian that is in earnest: a Christian that is in earnest won't play with anything that is wrong, he won't play with it, he won't go to the edge of it, he won't play with himself in regard to it. If he is in downright earnest, he will really keep away from it, and that with all his strength.

II. What is the test by which a man can try whether or not he is going into temptation of his own accord? How is it we come into temptation? The answer again is quite clear. If your duty takes you into temptation, then you may be quite certain that God means you to face that temptation and to conquer it; you may be quite certain then that you will have strength given you to conquer it. He whose providence brought you there, He will make, as He promises Himself, the way to escape. You may trust Him to the

uttermost. You may feel quite sure that He will not leave you at the moment of peril. You need not have any alarm about it. You are certain to win, if only you will fight the battle; for there you are in temptation by His orders, and whatever you do by His orders you may be quite sure that He will carry you though everything that you have to face.

And of course, I am using 'duty' here in the fullest sense; I am using it to include all duty that you have to do, whether it be the duty to your fellow-men of any kind, or whether it be the duty to your family, or duty to any members of your family. All these duties, they have to be discharged, they have to be done thoroughly and well; and whenever any duty of this kind brings you into temptation, then indeed you must understand that the Lord is with you, and that you need not fear but what He will bring you through.

But that is quite a different thing from going into temptation of your own accord. When no duty calls you there at all, it is quite a different thing. And the Christian, if he is a Christian, has that fear about doing wrong that he is restrained, that he will keep from it by all the means that he can use. He will keep from it, he will fight hard when some occasion or other brings him face to face with some strong allurement, and he feels that there is that within him which is betraying the service of the Lord. He will fight hard, but he will be like the good soldier in the fight who never goes into needless danger. Is it not the rule of all military life, would it not be the imperative rule in battle, that a man must face any danger that comes, if there is a duty to be done in the facing of it; but that if he rashly goes into danger without any need at all, that man would be condemned by those who are in authority over him?—'because,' they will say, 'you had no right to risk either life or limb except by order.' And so it is too, in the spiritual battle, you have no right to run risks that you can avoid, you have no right to put yourself in peril of any evil, unless your duty carries you into the peril. You who are here living in this great metropolis are surrounded by temptations; you are surrounded by them morning, noon, and night; they abound everywhere about you. Will you remember that, if you are indeed soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, that which you have constantly to hold fast in all your life is never to go into temptation into which no duty summons you, lest perchance you bring on yourself some deadly fall. For you cannot doubt that, if you are there without any call of duty, you are really disobeying the Lord Himself, who bids us all keep from sin with all our might, from the sin from which He died to save us.

BISHOP TEMPLE.

# OUTLINES ON VARIOUS PASSAGES

## The Temptation in the Wilderness.

*And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.*
S. Luke iv. 13.

IT was in relation to His mediatorial character, to His eternal sympathy with His brethren in the flesh, as well as to accomplish our salvation upon the Cross, that our blessed Lord 'took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham'; that 'He had not where to lay His head'; that He 'was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'; that He wept, and fasted, and prayed. These were the ordinary temptations of all mankind, and therefore His by inheritance. But we shall much under-rate His trials if we stop here. He was subject to extraordinary temptations, such as no human being has ever been called upon to endure. In the temptation in the wilderness He entered upon the direct personal struggle with 'the prince of this world'; it was a superhuman temptation, and therefore marks Him, who was subjected to it, as superhuman; and the purpose of it, as directly connected with the main purpose of His coming. The human and ordinary temptation, therefore, of our Lord, was one thing; the superhuman and extraordinary was another. The first furnished, as we have seen, a connecting link between the unspeakable majesty of God, and the weakness of fallen man; the extraordinary trial was the concentration of that enmity, which had been proclaimed at the Fall, between the serpent and the seed of the woman; it issued in the first victory over 'the prince of the power of the air,' and was the forerunner of that final triumph, which was won upon the Cross, when the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, and the serpent bruised His heel. The temptation was, in fact, an instrument of our salvation, in a sense analogous to that of the Agony in the Garden, and the Crucifixion itself.

I. The devil began his attack by assailing the natural and innocent instincts of our nature. Our Saviour had fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, banished from men, and, for a time, forsaken by God and the holy angels. Moses, indeed, had also fasted forty days and nights, and so had Elijah, and a very remarkable coincidence this is in the three holy persons united in the Transfiguration. But we must carefully distinguish between the fasting of Moses and Elijah and that of Christ. The number of days was the same, but the two first were miraculously supported, whilst our Saviour 'was afterward an hungred,' and in that state met the tempter. It would be easy to expatiate upon the urgency of this first temptation, upon the acuteness of the sufferings of hunger, upon the physical and moral effects of long abstinence from food. But where the Scriptures

are silent on details, it is most becoming for the interpreter of Scripture to forbear. It is sufficient to say, that 'He was an hungred,' and that a cessation to His sufferings was offered Him by the transmutation of stones into bread; and that too under the specious pretext, as suggested by our great enemy, of making this miracle the test and proof of His being the Son of God. In the eyes of mere man, a compliance with the call of hunger might have appeared pardonable and natural: but not so in His eyes, who, though clothed in the weakness of humanity, looked not to the outward appearance of things, but to the essential principle implied in them. The Spirit had led Him into the wilderness, and had subjected Him to these fiery trials, and He was contented to wait till the Father should find a way for Him out of the temptation; looking for the preservation of His life to 'every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' and not for a momentary self-indulgence to the suggestions of an enemy, whose ultimate designs are ever gained by the first slightest acquiescence. He foiled the tempter by the Word of God, and the first victory over Satan was complete.

II. The two remaining temptations were of a more abstract and moral nature. They are related in a different order by S. Matthew and by S. Luke, nor does it appear of much practical importance which of them occurred the first; but there appears in the order observed by S. Matthew, a gradation which it may be edifying to remark. The second temptation appears to diminish in intensity and danger, as compared with the first; and the third to diminish in like manner, as respects the second. The real urgency of our Saviour's situation consisted apparently in His being 'an hungred.' This attack having been foiled, the second assault, being an endeavour to excite His spiritual presumption, by an appeal to His acknowledged attributes as the Messiah, 'concerning whom God should give His angels charge, lest at any time He should hurt His foot against a stone'; this second assault was still less likely to be successful than the first, because our Saviour was too well assured of His own real character to admit of His tempting God's providence by so unnecessary a miracle. And again; the second temptation being overcome by the same Scriptural weapons, the third was the mere offspring of the tempter's despair. The third temptation, by being more palpable, appears to have been most decisively resisted; and, being resisted, to have closed the series of the present temptations.

III. What are the practical fruits of this day's meditations? It appears, then, that the temptation in the wilderness, the duration of which is marked by a corresponding portion of our ecclesiastical year, is not to be regarded as a light thing, but as an edifying fact, most intimately blended with the deepest mysteries of our faith. That

man takes a very inadequate view of the redeeming sufferings of Christ who confines his feelings of thanksgiving and wonder to the single death upon the Cross. The whole essence of our Saviour's manifestation, from His birth in the manger, to His death upon Mount Calvary, was voluntary suffering, a suffering on our behalf. For us and for our sakes He came down from heaven, and was made Man; for us He was born in a lowly station; for us He was acquainted with grief; for us He was tempted; for us He endured the contradiction of sinners; for us He suffered agony; for us He was buffeted, rejected, and reviled; and for us also He suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried. From henceforth, therefore, let us meditate upon this portion of Scripture as it deserves, as relating, not a mere additional fact in our Lord's life, which has no connection with the main history, but one of those facts, upon which our salvation turns. And, above all, let us allow our meditations to shine forth in our lives. In every temptation that assails us, let us look to the Captain of our Salvation. His contest was for the whole race of man; our battle is for ourselves. His temptations were superhuman; 'there hath no temptation taken us, but such as is common to man.' He went forth into the wilderness in the full power of the Spirit after His baptism, and after His public recognition as the Son of God; we too are the sons of God by baptism; we too have the gifts of the Spirit, and it is our own fault, if we enter upon the conflict without 'the whole armour of God.'

R. W. JELF.

## An Example for Lent.

*John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.* S. LUKE vii. 33-35.

THUS did our blessed Lord, in His own Person, draw the contrast between Himself and His forerunner, a contrast which no one else could have ventured to handle so plainly without danger of irreverence. Yet since He has done it, and since two of His Evangelists, starting as it would appear from different sides of the Church, have reported His words, we cannot doubt that He designed that we should ponder and weigh them well.

I. Let us, first, for a few moments, consider the nature and extent of the contrast, and then ask ourselves whether it is possible to assign a reason and a meaning to it.

There can be no doubt that the contrast in external habits of life between our Lord and the Baptist was a very striking one. The

Baptist was from his childhood an inhabitant of the desert. He was dressed like one of the ancient prophets, his food was locusts and wild honey, coarse and requiring little preparation; his message was a stern one, a simple proclamation of the duty of repentance; uncompromising towards others, and unassuming as regarded himself—nay, he expressly diverted attention from himself to One who was to come after him. While he gathered disciples around him, and taught them to be in some points like himself, and, in particular, gave special precepts as to forms of prayer and days of fasting, he did not hold up his own character as a pattern for universal imitation. He was the voice that heralded another's advent, the servant preparing the way of his Master, the Bridegroom's friend leading the spiritual bride, the true Israel, to her Divine Spouse. In all these respects our blessed Lord differed much from him—nay, in most, was almost his exact opposite.

Let us, as far as we may, and as reverently as possible, piece together the notices of what our Lord seemed to those about Him. The whole outward frame and colour of His life looks as if intended to avoid all singularity. His childhood, and early manhood, after the first months or years of infancy, was passed in a well-known but unpopular little town, and in a well-known and numerous household. As far as the world—in ignorance of the miraculous birth—could see, the Man Jesus was a child of Nazareth, dwelling with His parents, and with four brothers and at least three sisters: one of a homely circle, from which there is no evidence that He separated Himself in any marked way before His baptism. His dress was like that of others, simple and yet good of its kind. His language was that of the people, a Syrian dialect rather than the Hebrew of the schools and lecture-rooms, yet it was the language of an educated man even by the testimony of His enemies. When His ministry had for some little while begun, He left Nazareth and made another home at Capernaum, still at first with some of His family; it was not till later, owing to circumstances which are only partly recorded, so little stress is laid upon the fact, that He became One that 'had not where to lay His head.' In His teaching there was the same simplicity and gentleness. With His proclamation of repentance there was coupled from the first a call to believe the gospel, that is, the good news of the love of God, and, though sternness was from time to time mingled with His message, it was not the sternness of one who wishes to terrify, but the majestic truthfulness of one who desires to draw sinners from darkness into light. His precepts of external religion delivered to His followers were few. He baptized, indeed, as John did, but left the actual performance of the rite to His principal disciples, after having first, we may suppose, baptized them Himself.

He gave a prayer when asked to do so, that is to say, when pressed by the example of John, but it was a short one, and one that might seem at first sight to have much in common with existing forms. Throughout He took for granted the spirituality of the Law, and seemed to aim rather at bringing out its true substance and meaning, and at relieving it from false glosses and traditions, than at creating a new religion. He took for granted prayer, fasting, and alms-giving, reading of the Scriptures, offering of sacrifices and gifts, singing of psalms and hymns, keeping Sabbaths and festivals—all the outer forms of Judaism as received from Moses and the ancient prophets, and in so doing He might well excite the wonder of some of the more ardent of the followers of John, who had expected to see a radical change worked, who were therefore anxious, before their master passed away, to have an answer to the question: 'Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?'

But in nothing perhaps has our blessed Lord's outer life more contrast with the Baptist than in His readiness to enter into society without an appearance of effort or condescension. So much was this the case that the beloved Disciple, writing long after the days he is describing, yet with a perfectly vivid memory, thinks it enough to say, 'Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.' He does not think it necessary to add that Jesus went. He went, as it was clearly His habit to go, wherever His presence was desired.

II. There remains but one other great point of difference between our Lord's personal attitude and that of the Baptist, but that is one which is the key to the whole. The Baptist assumed nothing for himself, but pointed on to Christ. Christ, without any strain or effort, assumed everything for Himself. He accepted the Baptist's homage. He claimed as His simple and indefeasible right the position of a perfect Teacher and a perfect Example: 'Come unto Me'; 'Learn of Me'; 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' It is a paradox, but none the less an evident truth, that the simplicity of our Lord's surroundings was a support to Him—we may even venture to say a necessity to His position in asserting and making good these astounding claims. In no other way that we can imagine could the real originality of the gospel have been manifested, and its moral and spiritual power displayed; in no other way that we could conceive would it have been possible for Him to give an example within the reach and scope of all men, or one fit for all men to follow. It was clearly our Heavenly Father's will that His Son, in taking human flesh, should not be marked by any singularities or peculiarities of habit which could divert attention from His teaching, and from the general purpose of His life. It was impossible for Him, therefore, to attach Himself to any school, or sect, or party, to be the

pupil of any doctor or rabbi, to uphold even any single great moral principle or political ideal in any degree of strength disproportionate to His general teaching. To have done so would at once have given a handle to censors and fault-finders, then and now, and to those worse than censorious persons who seek to degrade everything to the level of natural development. We know how some of these, seizing upon the external features of the Baptist's example, have proclaimed falsely enough that he was an ascetic, and therefore a natural product of his age. What a triumph would it have been to some petty caviller if our Lord's example had presented any such salient points even as those of His forerunner! And surely we feel, and others felt from the first age of the Church, that our Lord's power gained and maintained its hold on our allegiance in direct proportion to our conception of the harmony of His life. We are conscious that this is the supreme instance of an important truth often experienced, but seldom fully and consistently applied, that true human greatness is to be found in humility, and that true humility consists, not in an affected roughness of bearing, but in a frank acceptance of the ordinary conditions of life. If we are to move the world, it must be by taking our place quietly, and using all that is innocent and helpful in our surroundings as a basis from which to proclaim whatever great truths God has made known to us.

BISHOP WORDSWORTH.

## About getting on.

(*Sermon for Children.*)

*Go up higher.* S. LUKE xiv. 10.

I. GOD means us all to get on. Well, if we are to get on, the first thing we must do is to climb. The child who gets on is not content to be at the bottom of the school; he begins there, but he climbs till he gets to the top. There are two things which people have to remember in climbing; first, to look up, and next, not to turn back. I was once climbing up a very steep cliff, overhanging the sea. When I had gone up a long way, I looked down, and directly my head began to grow dizzy, and my legs to tremble. So I looked up again and went on climbing quite safely. A man once climbed up to a certain natural bridge over a torrent in America, and cut his name on it, higher than any man had ever done before. But when he tried to come down, he found it was impossible, the only safety for him was to keep on climbing right to the top. 'So it is with all climbing in this life, there is no going down, it is either climbing, or falling.' Remember, before we can reach the top of any

thing high we must climb, not sit at the bottom and wish. Many of our greatest men began at the bottom of the ladder, with no advantages, and plenty of difficulties, but they were climbers, and they got to the top.

II. We must be content to climb step by step as men climb a ladder. I have read of a little child who was taken to a great cathedral. He stood on the marble floor, and looked up with wonder at the men and women who were walking in a gallery round the great dome, a hundred and fifty feet above him. How did they ever get there, thought the child. He longed to get there too, but he thought, 'It 's too high, too far for me.' Then the child's father opened a door in the wall, and taking him by the hand, led him through it. The child saw some stone steps in a winding staircase. One by one he put his feet upon the steps, and presently he found himself in the gallery with the blue dome just above his head, and the floor on which he had stood far below. He had come all the way step by step. So. must you climb; let Jesus take you by the hand, and lead you on step by step.

H. J. WILMOT BUXTON.

## The Burning of the Books.

*And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.* Acts xix. 18, 19.

TIMES have changed. People nowadays have almost as much to gain, by being known as Christians, as once on a time they had to lose.

But, though times have changed, the words of the Lord Jesus are as true to-day as they were in the first ages: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' Sacrifice and self-denial are required of Christ's followers still.

We have even now entered upon that solemn season in which these duties are specially urged upon us. And Lent, for this very reason, is unpopular with many, who dislike to be reminded of duties they would rather not perform.

I. Let me ask you this First Sunday in Lent, what are you going to give up? What sacrifice are you going to make, in time, money, sleep, labour, for Jesu's sake, for the good of others, for your soul's health?

All through Lent, as you pass from scene to scene of the blessed

life of temptation, and toil, and suffering, till Calvary is reached, the Saviour will be saying to you—

'This have I done for thee;
What doest thou for Me?'

What answer are you going to make?

And, of course, I have been speaking thus far of things lawful, and the duty of denying ourselves even in these. But what shall I say about things unlawful and sinful?

II. Look again at that scene in Ephesus. Picture it, the broad street, the crowded thoroughfare, the burning pile of evil books. Listen to some of the scoffers, 'fools' and 'lunatics' they are calling these men whose conscience God has awakened.

But the air is purer, the city healthier, the atmosphere is clearer, after the fire has done its work; even as London was after the great fire had burnt out the lingering plague, and purified the air.

Young men, have you, literally, burnt your bad books? If you have not, then do so the moment you get home. Burn them. Do not pass them on, do not sell them, or get rid of them, in any way. Those books are only fit for the fire. Go, and burn them!

Then what about those betting books, the only books some men ever look into, the only 'books' some consider worth calling by the name. Your gain is another's loss, and you are glad of that other's loss. Go and burn your betting books, and your gambling records, and you will never regret the day in which you did so.

J. B. C. MURPHY.

## The Dual Life of Man.

*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.* ROMANS vi. 12.

A GREAT many of you have doubtless read a little story which has recently attracted much notice. It is the tale of a man who, by scientific discovery, had learned to separate his life into two, to disintegrate his own individuality, to incarnate, as it were, into a separate existence, a distorted, misshapen, deceitful being, who is the concentration of all that is evil in itself. Having made this discovery, he can, when he chooses, assume this aspect and character, and, after indulging all that is corrupt and debased in his nature, can return to his proper shape, which is that of a man respectable, nay, even honourable and beloved. Thus he tries at once to indulge and to conceal, to gratify and repudiate the lower nature, to do all that is good in his life as one man, and all that is vile in his life as another man, who is yet the same. But he finds that the

earnestly against it. There is no one word, I think, which will perfectly express its name in English. But we know that the devil has no shrewder trick than to sham dead; and so I venture to believe that it may be worth while to look somewhat more closely at a temptation which seems to be now so much less feared than once it was.

The sin of 'Acedia,' or, as it is sometimes and less accurately written, 'Accidie,' had, before Dante's time, received many definitions: and while they agree in the main, their differences in detail show that the evil was felt to be subtle and complex. As one compares the various estimates of the sin, one can mark three main elements which help to make it what it is, elements which can be distinguished, though in experience, I think, they almost always tend to meet and mingle: They are gloom, sloth, and irritation; the first and third of the three seem foremost in Dante's thoughts about the doom of 'Acedia'; the second comes to the front when he is thinking how the penitent may be cleansed from it in the intermediate state. Gloom and sloth; a sullen, heavy, dreary mist about the heart, chilling and darkening it, till the least thing may make it fretful and angry; such was the misery of the 'Accidiosus.' So S. Augustine is quoted as defining the sin to be *fastidium interni boni*: 'A distaste for the soul's good.' S. Gregory the Great calls it 'a languid dejection of body and soul about the praiseworthy exercise of virtues'; and S. Bernard, 'A sluggishness of the mind that cares not to set about good works nor to keep them up.' And so too, in later times, it was said to be 'a certain sadness which weighs down the spirit of man in such wise that there is nothing that he likes to do'; or 'a sadness of the mind which weighs upon the spirit, so that the person conceives no will towards well-doing, but rather feels it irksome.' So Chaucer also, 'Accidie or slouth maketh a man hevy, thoughtful, and wrawe. Envie and ire maken bitterness in heart, which bitterness is mother of Accidie, and benimeth (or taketh away) the love of all goodness. Then is Accidie the anguish of a troubled heart.' 'Of Accidie cometh first that a man is annoyed and encumbered to do any goodness,' 'for Accidie loveth no business at all.' Lastly, let me cite two writers, who speak more fully of the character and signs and outcome of the sin.

The first is Cassian, who naturally has a great deal to say about it. For all the conditions of a hermit's life, the solitude, the sameness, the austerity, the brooding introspection in which he lived, made it likely and common that this should be his besetting sin: and Cassian had marked it as such during the years which he spent among the solitaries of the Egyptian deserts. In that book of his Institutes which he devotes to it, he defines it as weariness or anxiety of heart, a fierce and frequent foe to those who dwell in solitude; and

elsewhere he speaks of it as a sin that comes with no external occasion, and often and most bitterly harasses those who live apart from their fellow-men. There is something of humour and something of pathos, in the vivid picture which he draws of the hermit who is yielding to Acedia. How utterly all charm and reality fade for him out of the life that he has chosen, the life of ceaseless prayer and contemplation of the Divine Beauty; how he hates his lonely cell and all that he has to do there. How hard, disparaging thoughts of all the hermits who live near it crowd into his mind. How he cannot sit still, or read, or pray, or do anything at all. How much he dwells on the good he might be gaining and doing anywhere else than where he is. And then he feels very tired, and very hungry, as though he had walked ever so far, or fasted two or three days, and he strolls restlessly out of his cell and back again, and wonders why no one comes to see him, and why the sun is setting so slowly; or he dwells on possible excuses for going out and gossiping until it appears a positive and urgent duty; and so he idles and grumbles till the dull gloom settles down over heart and mind, and all spiritual energy dies away in him.

II. It occurs to one at once that this misery of Acedia lies on the border-line between the physical and the spiritual life; that if there is something to be said of it as a sin, there is also something to be said of it as an ailment. It is a truth that was recognised long, by S. Jerome, and Cassian, and by Thomas Aquinas, who expressly discusses and dismisses this objection against regarding Acedia as a sin at all. Undoubtedly, physical conditions of temperament and constitution, of weakness, illness, harassing weariness, over-work, may give at times to such a mood of mind and heart a strange power against us; at times the forces for resistance may seem frail and few. It is a truth which should make us endlessly charitable, endlessly forbearing, and considerate and uncritical towards others: but, surely, it is a truth that we had better be shy of dwelling on and using for ourselves. It will do us no harm to overestimate the degree in which our own gloom and sullenness are voluntary; it will do us very great harm to get into the way of exaggerating whatever there may be in them that is physical and involuntary. For the border-line over which Acedia hovers is, practically, a shifting and uncertain line. We need not bring speculative questions out of their proper place to confuse the distinctness of the practical issue. We have ample warrant, by manifold evidence, by clear experience, for being sure for ourselves that the worth and happiness of life depends just on this: that, in the strength which God gives, and in the eagerness of His service, the will should ever be extending the range of its dominion; ever refusing to be shut out or overborne; ever restless in defeat, ever pushing on its frontier. Surely, it has been the secret of some of

the highest, noblest lives that have helped the world, that men have refused to make allowances for themselves; refused to limit their aspiration and effort by the disadvantages with which they started, refused to take the easy tasks which their hindrances might seem to justify, or to draw premature boundaries for the power of their will. As there are some men to whom the things that should have been for their wealth are indeed an occasion of falling, so are there others to whom the things that might have been for their hindrance are an occasion of rising; who going through the vale of misery use it for a well, and the pools are filled with water. They shall go from strength to strength; in all things more than conquerors through Him who loveth them; wresting out of the very difficulties of life a more acceptable and glorious sacrifice to lift to Him; welcoming and sanctifying the very hindrances that beset them, as the conditions of that part which they, perhaps, alone can bear in the perfecting of His saints, in the edifying of the Body of Christ. And in that day when every man's work shall be made manifest, it may be found, perhaps, that none have done Him better service than some of those who, all through this life, have been His ambassadors in bonds.

III. Lastly, then, let me speak very simply of three ways in which we may, God helping us, extend and reinforce the power of our will to shut out and drive away this wasteful gloom, if ever it begins to gather round us; three ways of doing battle against what Chaucer vigorously calls this rotten-hearted sin of Accidie.

In the first place it will surely be a help we all may gain, to see more, to remember, and to understand more of the real, plain, stubborn sufferings that others have to bear; to acquaint ourselves afresh with the real hardships of life; the trials and anxieties and privations, and patience of the poor; the unfanciful facts of pain; 'for blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.' It is one part in the manifold privileges of a parish priest's life, that day by day he has to go among scenes which almost perforce may startle him out of any selfish, wilful sadness.

> 'When sorrow all our heart would ask,
> We need not shun our daily task,
> And hide ourselves for calm;
> The herbs we seek to heal our woe,
> Familiar by our pathway grow,
> Our common air is balm.'

Of old it was thought to be the work of tragedy that the spectator should be lifted to a higher level, where action and passion are freer and larger; so that he might be ashamed to go home from the contemplation of such sorrows to pity or alarm himself about little troubles of his own. But if the disasters of the stage could teach

men to be brave and quiet under trials that were less indeed, but still were real, how much more should that great ceaseless tragedy of actual anguish and distress that day and night goes on around us, rouse and shame us all out of the idle, causeless, gloom that sometimes hangs about men's hearts. Those are very noble words of one, who in our day, has frankly and faithfully shared with the world his own profound experience both of despondency and of deliverance: 'Suffer me not, O Lord, suffer me not to forget how at the very moment, it may be, I am thus playing with a fantastic grief, it is actually faring with multitudes of my fellows many times better and truer and holier than myself. Think, O my soul, of all those, the mourners who have survived everything, even hope itself, the incurables who pace the long halls of pain in the vast hospital of this world; its deposed, discrowned, and disinherited, for whom all the ornament of life has for ever departed, perhaps by their own fault, perhaps by that of others, but in either case gone, and so gone that it never can come back again; long pain the road by which, and death the goal to which, they must travel.' Surely the sin of Accedie seems most hateful and unmanly in the presence of such thoughts as these.

There is another very safe and simple way of escape when the dull mood begins to gather round us, and that is to turn as promptly and as strenuously as we can to whatever work we can at the moment do. If the energy, the clearness, the power of intention is flagging in us, if we cannot do our best work, still let us do what we can; for we can always do something: if not high work then low; if not vivid and spiritual work, then the plain, needful drudgery. Virgil's precept has its place in every way of life, and certainly in the inner life of all. When it is dull and cold and weary weather with us, when the light is hidden, and the mists are thick, and the sleet begins to fall, still we may get on with the work which can be done as well in the dark days as in the bright, work which otherwise will have to be hurried through in the sunshine, taking up its happiest and most fruitful hours. When we seem poorest and least spiritual, when the glow of thankfulness seems to have died quite away, at least we can go on with the comparatively featureless bits of work, the business letters, the mechanism of life, the tasks which may be almost as well done then as ever. And not only, as men have found and said in every age, is the activity itself a safeguard for the time; but also, very often I think, the plainer work is the best way of getting back into the light and warmth that are needed for the higher. Through humbly and simply doing what we can we retrieve the power of doing what we would. It was excellent advice of Mr. Keble's, 'When you find yourself overpowered, as it were, by melancholy, the best way is to go out, and do something kind to somebody or other.'

But there is yet one way above all other ways, I think, in which we ought to be ever gaining fresh strength and freedom of soul to rise above such moods of gloom and discontent; one means by which we should be ever growing in the steadiness and quiet intensity of the joy of love; it is, the serious and resolute consideration of that astounding work of our redemption which the love of God has wrought at so immense a cost. It is strange, indeed it would be inconceivable if it were not so very common, that a man can look back to Calvary, and still be sullen; that he can believe that all that agony was the agony of God the Son, willingly chosen for the love of sinful man, and still be thankless and despondent. Strange that he should be sullen still, when he believes that that Eternal and Unwearied Love is waiting even during the hours of his gloom and hardness, waiting, watching at his dull, silent heart, longing for the change to come, longing just for that turn of the will which may let in again the glad tide of light, and joy, and health. Strange that any one should be able to think what a little while we have in which to do what little good we may on earth, before the work is all sealed up and put aside for Judgment, and yet take God's great trust of life, and wilfully bid the heaven be dark at noon and wrap himself in an untimely night wherein no man can work. Strange, most strange, that any one should believe that this world is, indeed, the place where he may begin to train his soul by grace, for an everlasting life of love and praise, and joy prepared for him in sheer mercy by Almighty God, and still be sullen. Ah, surely, it can only be that we forget these things, that they are not settled deep enough in our hearts, that in the haste of life we do not think of them, or let them tell upon us. For, otherwise, we could hardly let our hearts sink down in any wilful wanton gloom, or lower our eyes from the glory of the western sky, which should ever brighten our faces as we press towards God; that glory which our blessed Lord was crucified to win for us, that glory whither the high grace of God the Holy Ghost has been sent forth to lead us.

DEAN PAGET.

## Our Calling.

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* EPHESIANS iv. 1-3.

LET us look at the text with the desire to find in it some indication of how Lent is to be kept. We are justified in choosing it this day, for it breathes so strongly the same spirit as the Epistle for the Day.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

I. Now, first, we turn again to the speaker, 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord.' An offensive word at once, a prisoner, in a twofold sense, the prisoner of the Lord; the prisoner convicted by the world of the offence of loving the Lord, and serving Him and preaching Him; therefore placed literally in captivity by that world that could not abide the plain and honest preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The prisoner of the Lord in another sense: belonging to the Lord, led captive by Him, bound to Him; but how? By the strongest of all bonds to a noble heart, by the bond of love; called by love, he embraced that service which is perfect freedom. He left for ever that fancied liberty which was the bondage of corruption. Again the servant echoes the Master's language. The Master says to those who declared they were never in bondage to any man, 'Whoso committeth sin is the servant of sin'; and S. Paul repeats, 'Ye were the servants of sin,' but adds, 'being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.'

This prisoner, then, bound by the iron fetters of man but free in spirit, bound by the fetters of grateful and adoring love to Christ, appeals still to the world. Such as he is, he speaks to the proudest, wealthiest, highest born; he would have them all such as he is, except the chain of his worldly captivity. And the prisoner once spoke to kings; now he speaks to all, praying you to 'bring every thought into captivity to the law of Christ.'

II. Praying you. Yes. But who, permit me to ask, are you? The Epistles of S. Paul were all addressed to the whole Church, the entire body of professing Christians in each town or place; and they, whatever the shades of their individual character, were addressed in virtue of their baptismal union as 'the saints,' 'the called,' 'the elect,' 'the Church.' Now you, as baptized men and women, are called, have a vocation; you are in covenant with God; you cannot be as those who have not been so received by Him.

III. Then how shall we appeal to you but in the language of the text, to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' The Spartan mother, when her son went forth to join his country's armies in his first campaign, said simply to him, 'Sparta owns you, add honour to her'; and never but as a conqueror did that son return alive. The Church of Christ owns us; how far do we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all or in anything? How often do we return day after day to the shelter of our Mother, the Church, stained with the soils of flight; our shield of faith cast away to aid our hasty retreat, our very name denied, our privileges repudiated; the vantage ground of our baptismal calling and sacramental grace denied to please an incredulous world; everything surrendered but our sins, nothing gained but shame! And then we come here! and

we go forth again, after a service scant of heart-devotion, to profess ourselves again 'attached members,' or to warble about 'our beloved Church'; forgetting that such membership or such love is in reality a pledge to be faithful unto death; to fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil; to quit ourselves like men; to be strong in the strength of Christ.

How, in a word, may we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called?

In all lowliness and meekness,—Oh, what a contrast! What a contradiction, if we measure things by the world's standard! But no contradiction at all if we remember that we are not servants of 'the Prince of this world,' whose darling sin is pride, but followers of Him whose vocation, whose calling, is 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden . . . for I am meek and lowly in heart.'

G. C. HARRIS.

## VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

*Temptation.* S. Matt. iv.

Satan will seldom come to a Christian with a gross temptation; a green log and a candle may be safely left together: but bring a few shavings, then some small sticks, and then larger, and you may soon bring the green log to ashes.

We are told that when Ulysses was passing by the coast of the Enchanted Isle, where the Sirens lived and sang, he had to have his ears stopped with wax, and himself bound to the mast of the ship, lest he should wish to listen to their song, and so become intoxicated with pleasure, and never get beyond that shore, as had been the case with all others.

Frequent conflicts render the Christian strong. They fit preachers for their work—*oratio, meditatio, tentatio, faciunt theologum.*

I find it most true, that the greatest temptation out of hell is to live without temptations; if my waters would stand, they would rot. Faith is the better for the free air and the sharp winter storm in its face; grace withereth without adversity. The devil is but God's master-fencer, to teach us to handle our weapons.

*Temptation and Affliction.* S. Matt. iv.

Remember that a time of affliction is a time of temptation. Satan will not be wanting in any opportunity or advantage of setting upon the soul. When Pharaoh

heard that the people were entangled in the wilderness, he pursued them. And when Satan sees a soul entangled with its distresses and troubles, he thinks it is his time and hour to assault it. He seeks to winnow, and comes when the corn is under the flail. Reckon therefore, that when trouble cometh, the prince of this world cometh also, that you may be provided for him. Then is the time to take the shield of faith, that we may be able to quench his fiery darts. If they be neglected, they will inflame the soul. Watch, therefore, and pray, that you enter not into temptation, that Satan do not represent God falsely unto you. He that durst represent Job falsely to the All-seeing God, will, with much more boldness, represent God falsely unto us, who see and know so little. Be not then ignorant of his devices, but every way set yourself against his interposing between God and your souls, in a matter which he hath nothing to do with. Let not this makebate by any means inflame the difference.

*Temptation and Prayer.* S. Matt. iv.

Very strikingly do the gospels illustrate for us our danger, and the daily value of this petition. At about the same time strong temptation came to our Lord, to Peter, and to Judas Iscariot. It came to our Lord; but the tempter found nothing in Him, no point of vantage. It came to Peter, secure as he thought himself from its attacks; heedless, therefore, and unwatchful, he entered into temptation and fell; the tempter found something in him, and used his opportunity. Temptation came also to the unhappy traitor, and carried all before it, the tempter entered into him, and made him his prey.

*Temptation and Holiness.* S. Matt. iv.

He forced Him not; he touched Him not; only said, 'Cast Thyself down': that we may know, whosoever obeyeth the devil, casteth himself down; for the devil may suggest, compel he cannot.

*The Tempter.* S. Matt. iv.

Behind temptation and evil there is here recognised the baneful agency of a personal tempter, an evil one. Our great writers of fiction invariably have a demon in human character plotting the ruin of a hero or heroine; but whose malevolent designs are, as a rule, thwarted by a counteracting good agency. And this, to those who see below the surface of things, is true to life. The Holy Scriptures tell the children of God that they have, in a fallen spirit, an unscrupulous foe, who is the father of lies: 'Your adversary the devil, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;' the calumniator of God, and of all that is good; the accuser of the brethren, whose assaults they must encounter, with whom they will have to wrestle, against whom they must watch and pray; and,

in order to withstand and resist him successfully, they must arm themselves with the panoply of God. And this prayer, to be delivered from evil, is a cry to 'the Stronger than the strong,' for help in an unequal contest; to the 'Advocate with the Father,' for His interposition on our behalf; to the 'Good Shepherd,' to deliver His sheep from the teeth of the destroyer and 'to save them to the uttermost,' both of peril and of need.

*Inheriting the Earth.*
2 Cor. vi. 10.

Bishop Burnet treated with most distinguished regard such clergy in his diocese as were eminent for their piety and most attentive to the souls of their people. One of these had frequently expressed the importance of well understanding our Lord's meaning in the Beatitudes and of this in particular, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' Many anxious inquiries yet left this clergyman unsatisfied in his mind of the just and true explanation.

In this state of mind he happened in a morning's walk to observe a very wretched-looking hovel, and walking towards it he heard, to his surprise, a voice of joyous praise. He looked in at the window, and saw a poor woman with a piece of black bread and a cup of water before her. With her eyes lifted up to heaven, she was repeating the words, 'All this, and Jesus Christ too! All this, and Jesus too!' The clergyman here learnt that they who inherit this earth are they who possess Jesus Christ.

*Temptation.*
S. Matt. iv.

In temptation to sin, if you wish for victory take to flight.

*Temptation follows graces.*
S. Matt. iv.

Christ is no sooner out of the water of baptism than He is in the fire of temptation; whence we learn that great manifestations of the love of God are usually followed with great temptations from Satan (S. Matthew iv. 1).

*Temptation the road to glory.*
S. Matt. iv.

None can be crowned unless he conquer, nor conquer unless he fight, nor fight unless he have enemies and temptations (2 Tim. ii. 3-5; S. James i. 2).

*True Fasting.*
S. Matt. iv.

Our fasting should be accompanied with abstinence from evil; we must fast from our passions and vices: without this, bodily fasting is unprofitable. Take heed that you make not your fasting to consist only in abstinence from meats. True fasting is to refrain from vice. Tear in pieces all your unjust obligations. Pardon your neighbour. Forgive him his trespasses. Fast not to stir up strife and contention. You eat no flesh, but you devour your brother

(S. Matt. xxiii. 14). You drink no wine, but you cannot refrain from doing injury to others. You wait till night to take your repast, but you spend all the day at the tribunal of the judges. Woe be to you, who drink without wine. Anger is a kind of inebriation, which does no less trouble the mind than real drunkeness (Isa. lviii. 4-11; Jer. xiv. 12; S. Mark ii. 18).

*Craftiness of the Devil.*
S. Matt. iv.

When Satan first comes to tempt, he is modest, and asks but a little. He digs about and loosens the roots of faith, and then the tree falls the easier on the next gust of temptation.

*Persistency of the Devil.*
S. Matt. iv.

The enemy of man's salvation deems it no small torment to abandon his suffering victim, and the longer he has had possession, the more reluctant is he to quit (S. Mark ix. 21).

*The Lord will provide.*
Genesis xxii. 14

The celebrated Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork, who rose from a humble station in life to the highest rank, and passed through strange and trying vicissitudes, used these words as his motto, and ordered them to be engraved on his tomb: 'God's providence is my inheritance.'

# Second Sunday in Lent

## Scriptures Proper to the Day.

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|---|---|
| EPISTLE | 1 THESS. IV. 1-8. |
| GOSPEL | S. MATT. XV. 21-28. |
| FIRST MORNING LESSON | GEN. XXVIII. 1-4. |
| FIRST EVENING LESSON | GEN. XXVIII. OR GEN. XXXII. |
| SECOND LESSONS | ORDINARY. |

## I. COMPLETE SERMON

### The Distinguishing Message of the Gospel.

*And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean.*
S. MATTHEW viii. 3.

THE words were spoken to a leper, and they were the very last words that any one save He who spoke them would ever have dreamed of saying to a man that was a leper. Most men, if they had spoken to him at all, would have bidden him keep his distance. Some few, perhaps, with tenderer hearts, might have flung to him a word or two of passing pity. One here and there might have bestowed an alms on him or suggested to him some remedy for the alleviation of his sufferings. But not one would ever for a moment have thought of saying to him, 'Be thou clean.' It was left for Jesus of Nazareth to say this to the poor wretch who lay at His feet, and cried to Him for mercy. 'Be thou clean,' He said. The words might have been words of mere advice counselling him to betake himself to the best remedies in the hope that perhaps by the diligent use of them cleansing might some day come. The words might have been mere words of encouragement as if He would say to him, 'Do not give way to despair, hope for the best, be of good cheer. Perhaps, after all, one day you shall go to the priest, and he shall pronounce you clean.' Or the words might have been mere words of fanaticism

assuming a power to heal which could only have mocked the misery which it could not remove. But the words in the lips of Jesus meant none of those things. They were words of real authority and unquestioned power. They were the expression of mysterious virtue which then and there went forth from the Speaker and in an instant made the leper whole. 'Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.'

What are we to think of one who could speak with power like this? As we listen to His words there rises up before us the outline of a great example to be followed. I do not mean now the example of compassion and love. Jesus did most truly pity and most truly love the leper, and the words that He spoke to him sparkle with the light of His divinity and love, and the example of His love is that which beckons us all to follow it. This is plain enough on the surface of the story. But there is another example set to us which is oftentimes overlooked. The words of Jesus not only express the tenderest pity for the sufferer, but they likewise express His abhorrence of the disease which made him suffer. The disease was foul and horrible, and in the same breath in which He pronounced deliverance to the sufferer He likewise pronounced His ban upon the disease. 'Be thou clean' means not only, 'I abate thy sufferings,' but it means likewise 'I hate thy disease.'

Does not this inner thought of Jesus of Nazareth discover itself to us as we mark His life and actions while He was here upon earth? There was no need for Him to select the sick and the diseased and the possessed of devils as the material through which He should display His almighty power and accredit Himself as the Son of God. If He simply wanted to display His power He might have turned the mountains upside down or dried up the great ocean, or blotted out the sun from the sky. And if it was love that was the only motive that impelled Him, then He might have set Himself to staunch all those gaping wounds of humanity that are made by sorrows that are tenfold worse than the pain of any disease. But no. He will face sickness and He will do battle with disease, and if men are to have proofs of almighty power they should see them here. By the touch of His hand, by the word of His mouth, by the great unseen virtue going forth from His person He will attack and crush and kill disease. Surely He must, then, have abhorred the disease against which He waged such constant warfare. Was it that the human body seemed to Him so sacred a thing that He could not bear the thought that disease should invade and injure and torture it? Was it that He saw in all diseases what certainly He tells us He saw in one, the handiwork of Satan? He said that Satan had bound that poor bent woman for eighteen years, and that He loosed her from the chain with which Satan had bound her. Did He mean when He said this that all

disease is the handiwork of Satan, which God permits him to employ? and can that be the reason that He Himself was never sick, that Satan had no power to touch His sacred Body with disease. We cannot say for certain that it was so, but if it was so, it is an explanation to us at once of that divine abhorrence of disease which He so often displayed, and which He showed when He said to the leper, 'Be thou clean.'

But what of example can there be to us in this? The mind of Christ is to be the mind of Christ's followers. If it was His mind to wage war upon disease it is to be the mind of His people too. If in His abhorrence of disease He said those words to the leper, 'Be thou clean,' He means us to say similar words too, and it is possible for us to say it, and to say these words with power. Every single individual who refuses to indulge to excess the cravings of his body at the expense of and in violation of the laws of health; every one who by temperance and moderation and self-restraint does what he can to defend his body from the attacks of disease; every doctor who carefully studies his science with the view of fighting disease; every community which builds and maintains its hospitals in order to help the poor in their warfare against disease; every governing body which pays attention to drainage and ventilation and pure water; every landlord who takes care that the dwellings out of which he draws his rents should not be, as too often they are allowed to be, nests in which disease is bred, all these in their measure and degree are taking up Christ's words and following Christ's example and saying, 'Be thou clean.' They are bidding defiance to disease, not with the almighty power of the Son of God, but yet with a power that is real and true. They are following the example which our Master set when at every turn He dealt His blows at disease. Modern philanthropy has stolen some of its best watchwords from the Christianity which it so often repudiates. The enthusiasts of sanitary science do not know oftentimes that they have learned their lessons from Him who said, 'Be thou clean.'

But then when Christ said those words He not only pointed out one direction in which He would have his disciples follow His great example, but He likewise taught to us the great deep spiritual truths which concern us, every one. It was a leper to whom He spoke these words, and leprosy was God's own picture of the soul's sore disease which we call by the name of sin. And when Jesus said to the leper, 'Be thou clean' and by His divine power made the leper clean, it is a revelation to us, a most blessed revelation, of how the cleansing of the soul can be brought about.

What do we mean by the cleansing of the soul? We were singing in the hymn at the beginning of this service those well-known words

of prayer, that the blood of Jesus might be the 'double cure' to cleanse from the 'guilt and power' of sin. And when we speak of the cleansing of the soul we mean first of all most certainly the removal, the cleansing away, of the guilt that attaches to every human soul by reason of sin. And there is no need of any preacher to set about proving that there is no human power that can release the soul from guilt. You cannot undo the acts which fasten guilt upon you. God Himself cannot do that. You cannot make amends for the sins of which you have been guilty. You have no sufficient means of doing it, you have no adequate excuse to plead for the sins which have made you guilty, you have not good deeds enough to counterbalance if that were possible the sins of which you have been guilty. We have no power to help ourselves. That is our condition; a condition which left to itself would make us absolutely hopeless. It was the condition of the leper as he lay before Christ. But when the voice of Jesus said to him, 'Be thou clean,' immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And we are meant to learn the stupendous lesson that the Son of God was manifested, and that He lived and died that death upon the Cross on purpose that He might say to the leprous soul, 'Be thou clean.'

And He does say it. He said it again and again with His living lips when He was here upon earth. He said it to the poor man that lay before Him sick of the palsy, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.' He said it to the poor daughter of shame as she wept and covered His feet with her tears. He said, 'Her sins which are many are forgiven her.' He has said it over and over again down through the ages, through the ministry of His Church. He has said it doubtless to many among yourselves. To every one who comes to Him seeking it with the leper's intensity and earnestness He will always say, as He said to Him, 'Be thou clean.'

And when He says it He means that the guilt is to be cleansed away. But that is not all that the cleansing of the soul means. That cleansing of guilt is conditional upon the other cleansing which we express by the word repentance, and the thought is meant to be constantly before our souls through this season of Lent, and especially as the time draws near to that day when we shall be summoned to stand beneath the Redeemer's Cross. And by repentance, of course, we do not mean mere sorrow and regret for sin. Who would not feel sorrow and regret for sin when he is smarting for its consequences? Nor does it mean a mere groaning under the burden of sin, nor the mere longing to be free from it. But it does mean the actual forsaking of it, and nothing less than or short of that. Forsake it, I hear some one say, how can that be possible? It has grown up with me, it has twined itself into my very being,

it is part of my nature, it is part of myself. To forsake it is to cut my very self in twain. The thing is impossible, and if that is what repentance means I know not how to repent. Such is the thought of many. Forsake it, says another man—yes. I will give it up, I will turn my back upon it by the strength of my will, by the determination of my effort it shall be forsaken. Ah, it is easier said than done, as many a man has found out. The strength of his will, the determination of his effort has all gone down into the dust before the mighty power of an old temptation. It is easy to promise, easy to resolve, easy to make a few first efforts, but to do the thing and to forsake our sins needs a power outside of ourselves altogether. Men sometimes speak as if nothing in the world were easier than to repent. They call it the turning over of a new leaf, as if it could be done as easily as turning over the page of a book. These are exhorted to repent in a single moment as though the whole moral being could be in an instant swung round into the opposite direction as easily as the body can be turned upon the heel. But any man or woman who has ever entered into conflict, serious and earnest, with one single besetting sin will have learned soon enough their own weakness and their own helplessness, and have found out that repentance is impossible to a man or a woman left to themselves. And yet repentance is that to which we are exhorted and is therefore possible to us. The same divine voice which spake with power to the leper and set him free from his leprosy, speaks also to the sinful soul and can set it free from the dominion of its sin. Jesus was exalted that He might give repentance, and upon the soul that seeks it and longs to have it He is ready to bestow it, and to say to the soul, 'Be thou clean.' And there are thousands to-day who can testify that the power of Christ has set them free from their sins and enabled them to be victorious over their temptations.

And remember, that it is this cleansing of repentance which is the one sure guarantee of the cleansing of pardon. How do you know that God has forgiven you your sins? How can you know it? You may think it to be true, you may hope it to be true. Your stirred emotions may persuade you that it is true. But to know of a certainty that God has delivered you from the dominion of your sin, that the divine voice, 'Be thou clean,' has stopped and turned back and healed the disease that was corrupting your whole being, that is God's own unmistakeable dominion; that He has said likewise to your guilt, 'Be thou clean,' that He has cleansed and pardoned even you for the sake of Him who died for your sins upon the Cross. That is the great distinguishing message of the Gospel of our Redeemer. It has

nothing to say if it does not offer to us the forgiveness of our sins. It does offer it to us with the voice of Christ Himself, with the voice of His inspired Apostles, with the continued voice of His Church all down the ages. The voice of Christ still says to us, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee'; and He says it upon the one condition which can never be left out of sight, that thou art ready and willing and anxious to forsake thy sins; and when it is true and when thy penitence is sincere and when the sacrifice of thy penitence is offered at the foot of the Cross, then comes the voice, with the very music of heaven, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.'

P. F. ELIOT.

## II. OUTLINES ON THE EPISTLE

### Our Consecration the Will of God.

*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.* 1 THESSALONIANS iv. 3.

I. E will first endeavour to grasp, by the help of Scripture, the idea of sanctification.

We find the word applied in Scripture to things, and to persons.

We find the earliest example of it in the second chapter of the Bible. It is applied there to the seventh day. God 'sanctified' it. In the second book of the Bible we find it applied to a mountain, on which God manifested His presence to a rescued nation. We find it applied, later on, to the Tabernacle, which was the central point of the religion of Israel; to the altar, which was the central point of the typical and prophetical system; to the temple, afterwards, and its appendages, which were the more permanent forms of the ritual institutions of Sinai.

It is quite plain, from these instances, that the idea of sanctification is consecration. It is impossible that a moral or spiritual change can pass over a day, which is a division of time—or a mountain, which is a piece of nature—or a building, which is a thing made with hands. Appropriation to God is always the essence of sanctification.

We pass on to persons. And we find the term sanctification applied to the official setting apart of priests and prophets, whom God has ordained to be His servants and His ministers amongst a population not thus distinguished and separated. Sometimes we find that population itself described as sanctified, in contradistinction to a

world of idolatry and heathenism. Still it is the appropriation, it is the stamping with God's image and superscription, which is the point of the sanctification.

Sometimes, and here we reach the very text itself, sanctification is the progressive realisation, in spirit and conduct, of the one all-embracing consecration last spoken of. Not a change of nature, but an increasing and brightening presence, in the individual soul, of the Holy Ghost, in all His divine offices, unto transfiguration of character and transformation of life. At last, that complete and entire identification of the will of the man and the will of his God, which is the goal, the arrival, the heaven, of the redeemed and justified and sanctified. 'Blessed are they which do (here) hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' That is the consecration consummated in glory.

II. It is quite true that there are special foes of this consecration —and that the verse before us is imbedded in warnings. It would be a ruinous error, to dream of the ideal and neglect the practical. To say, 'If I look upward, if I try to enter into my sonship, if I call on God, in a vague general way, to assist and to perfect me, that is enough. Particular faults, special sins, neither make nor mar the spiritual condition. Let me live above sense and time, and by a spiritual communion with the Father of my spirit—and of course I shall either conquer day by day in detail, or, if I do not conquer, I shall not greatly, not utterly, fall.' This is Antinomianism. This is the perversion and parody of the thing spoken. The warfare is one of detail. It is the actual temptation, to do or not to do, of this moment, which is my business and my battlefield. Only we say that sanctification is a far higher, deeper, nobler, more illustrious thing, than the mere doing or the abstaining, in particulars. A man might be moral, might be useful, might be self-denying, and yet have no drop in him of the chrism and no spark of the consecration. There are sins which make special havoc of the consecration. They are those sins of which S. Paul speaks in this context, in this paragraph, taken from his earliest, simplest, most practical, epistle, sins which directly divide the allegiance and sully the loyalty, which put the creature, most visibly, in the place of the Creator, and fill God's temple, the soul, with foul and filthy idols. It is well that S. Paul, that our Lord Himself, should so distinctly, so solemnly, warn us of the incompatibility of these sins with gospel grace. 'God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness: he therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit'—that Spirit of grace and of consecration, who may, by any one of us, even after receiving Him, be so sinned against as to be sinned away.

'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.' Inexcusable, if this be so, the faint-hearted or the intermitted prayer—as though God heard not or heeded not! I pass from man to man along these aisles and these benches, and I say to one and to another, Have you aught to say against this saying? You say you have not found it true. You say too truly that you are not sanctified. But the word of God bids me ask again, Have you tried it to the uttermost? have you prayed as if God heard? Have you 'proved Him herewith,' by the promise and by the revelation—Thou willest my sanctification—work then in me to will and to do? DEAN VAUGHAN.

## III. OUTLINES ON THE GOSPEL

### The Fight of Faith between Jesus and the Canaanitish Woman.

*Then Jesus went thence, and departed unto the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* S. MATTHEW XV. 21-28.

I. HEN we speak of a fight of faith between Jesus and the Canaanitish woman, we mean by it—to explain it shortly beforehand—that both the Saviour and the Canaanitish woman had, each on their own account, with reference to each other, to endure a fight of faith; and it is certainly true that, according to outward appearances, the faith of the one came into collision with that of the other, and that each of them could only save his faith by the destruction of the faith of the other.

This fight was the more fierce in proportion to the greatness of the two faiths. The Lord Himself testified of the woman, 'O woman, great is thy faith'; and we shall be convinced in the sequel that His own faith was not less great.

His fight was a fight of the obedience of faith. This was one of the trials in which, 'though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of the eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him' (Heb. v. 8, 9). No one but the Saviour knew with such undoubted clearness and certainty of conviction in every single moment what to

do and what to leave undone. As He did nothing according to His own will, but depended entirely in all things upon the direction and guidance of His heavenly Father, as His Father never left Him alone, because He did always those things that pleased Him (S. John viii. 29), so all that He did and left undone was a doing or leaving of obedience; and indeed as He knew the will of His heavenly Father through faith, just as we also know it, it was a doing and leaving of the obedience of faith.

It was true, indeed, that Jesus and the Father were inseparably One, and that the Father's ways and thoughts were always His; but for this reason circumstances might often arise, in which His human and sensitive heart, under deep pain, not of unbelief and doubt, but of love, was forced to sacrifice His feelings and wishes of pity to the will of His heavenly Father, which He only recognised through faith —but through this with the greatest clearness and certainty—as the will of a higher love.

Such a case now arose. The heart of the Saviour said yea and amen to the request of the Canaanitish woman. But yet the Father had not shown Him this work to do, and therefore it was entirely decided for Him that He must not follow the impulses of His own heart.

In the case now before us, this is particularly apparent. Without a special command from the heavenly Father to grant the mother her request, Jesus could not think of it; for the general instruction which He had received from the Father entirely excluded the Canaanitish woman, as a heathen, from His assistance; only an express exception of the Father could grant it to her.

He acted in this case according to this principle, however it might break His heart. So holy, so manly, so entirely free from weakness and effeminacy was His love. And we will not forget that it is so still. To do the will of His Father—that is, the will of the highest love—is the noblest work of His love, far nobler than any other which now springs from the noblest sources of human emotions and feelings. We also will learn to love with such holy earnestness and obedience, with such deep humility and self-denial, however great may be the fight of faith which it costs us.

Now, the conflict between these two fighters of the faith arose quite naturally and unavoidably. The Saviour, who dared not disregard the will of His heavenly Father, cannot grant the woman her request, and is obliged, with all the power of His obedience of faith, to defend Himself more and more against all the armed force of her demands. The Canaanitish woman, on the other hand, did not dare to allow her faith to waver, however violently it might be attacked; she was obliged to fight with Him, even unto death, and

with all her efforts to endeavour to drive Him from His obedience of faith.

A strange and heart-rending conflict! How can it end otherwise than with the fall of the sorely tried woman? Or will not God find a means by which the two combatants may attain a glorious victory? The second part of our meditation furnishes the answer.

II. We see, then, the two fighters of faith still standing opposite each other well armed; all turns on this one point. Oh, well may both have been of good courage. The woman's faith had steadfastly endured the last storm, and now the Father from heaven threw light upon the mystery by His Spirit. Instead of being terrified at the Lord's answer, the Canaanitish woman found in it the strong anchor of her faith; and she is joyful and delighted that she for her faith has won a word from the Lord. Truly from this woman's soul has the Apostle written: 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul' (Hebrews x. 38, 39). 'Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.'

The Saviour had now decided. He now recognised clearly the drawing of the Father, of which He testifies: 'No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him' (S. John vi. 44). We may have learnt much to-day from this poor woman. He who does not know what faith is, can see it in her plainly. Before all we may learn from her to bear ourselves well in attacks of faith and fights of faith; and, as Luther says, 'come back and learn, with strong faith in God's word, to place and keep the deep and blessed Yea under and above the Nay, and to justify God in His judgment against us. Thus shall we conquer, and take Him in His own words.'

R. ROTHE.

## Christ's Silences.

*But He answered her not a word.* S. MATTHEW XV. 23.

CHRIST, we see, had His limitations, His moods of sternness, and His defeats. His limitations, imposed upon Him by His Father, recognised and accepted by Him in unquestioning dutifulness, are instructive in two ways. They indicate in a striking and impressive fashion that mighty and indisputable fact of the divine sovereignty, which crosses and perplexes and even disappoints us at every turn of life, which we can neither deny, nor evade, nor resist, and

which, if it should fill some of us with unspeakable thankfulness for the blessings it has brought to us, to others is the unfathomable problem of a clouded righteousness. 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' That was enough for Him, and He accepted it: His Father would presently justify Himself before the world. Of course the limitation of His ministry to the Jews meant the loss of it to the Gentiles, but 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'

He had His moods of sternness. Let us confess that in His pathetic history there is at first something which distresses us almost to pain. If we were to be silent to each other as the Lord was silent to that poor troubled mother, and then speak with the abruptness with which He addressed her, a great deal of self-control might be needed to prevent its being intolerable, and an immense kindness afterwards to wipe it from the heart. But the Lord knew His purpose and her nature. A hesitating or superficial pity might have marred a life-long blessing; in the words of the prophet: 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.' In truth, His love was too strong, too deep, too holy, to have anything of softness or weakness about it: it bruised that it might heal, it waited that it might double itself, and the gift was worth waiting for.

This defeat was the victory which the fulness of His own grace enabled her to win from His love. Faith which can remove mountains can overcome God. It is indeed the grace of God in man conferred for the purpose by God. Christ wondered at it, and then suffered her to claim from Him whatever she desired, 'O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt!' so 'the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

'He answered her not a word.' On the divine silences I wish to speak now. History is full of them, the Bible is full of them, personal experience is full of them. Most of us here know them to their cost; also, I doubt not, to their blessing. To observe the varieties of them, to discover the meaning of them, to recognise the wisdom of them, and to secure the blessing of them, is to go a very long way in fathoming the counsels of God. There are questions which God refuses to answer, and there are questions which He consents to answer, and for these questions light is to be gained from this conduct of Christ. The questions, or some of them, which Christ did not answer then, and will not answer now, are dishonest, or presumptuous or speculative, or controversial.

1. He will not answer dishonest questions, by which I mean questions put in an insincere spirit, or with a judgment and purpose already matured, or with no intention of obedience, or with motives

which may not bear the divine scrutiny, or in an almost insolent frivolousness.

> 'Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
> Who never deeply felt nor clearly will'd,
> Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
> Whose vague resolves have never been fulfilled;
> . . . . For whom each year we see
> Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new,
> Who hesitate and falter life away
> And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day.'

When the Pharisees demanded a sign He refused it. Was He not Himself all the sign that they could require? When the High Priest said unto Him, 'Answerest thou nothing?' He held His peace When Pilate asked Him, 'Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?' He answered him not a word. 'When Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad, and he questioned with Him in many words, but He answered him nothing.' This was partly in mercy, for it might have been only to increase their condemnation; partly in judgment, for the seared heart must be treated as it deserves; partly in dignity—could the Son of God consent to amuse the vacant moments of a vicious king? Yes, and there are many who even now come to Christ with what they call their questions, neither knowing what they want, nor quite clear that He has it to give them, either too shallow to be really in earnest, or too worldly to consent to part with but one bauble for the love of God. There is no voice; all is darkness and silence, He answers them not a word; and it must be admitted, they do not much care.

II. There are presumptuous questions, which ought not to be asked, for they can never be answered—questions which skirt the mysterious borderland between sense and spirit, between the visible and invisible worlds; questions on which neither of the three great revelations vouchsafed to man in Scripture and conscience and nature casts one gleam of light; questions for which science, properly so called, has nothing but an unspeakable disdain, and religion a solemn indignation. The spirit-world, with its invisible multitudes, its unguessed capacity, its unknowable occupations, is deliberately shut off from us by an impenetrable curtain of darkness. To strive to peep into that world when we please, and to filch its secrets, and to converse with its inhabitants, and to discover what they do, and think, and feel, by any mechanical jugglery such as that which seems to fascinate many, whose faith is not strong enough to confess a living God, but whose superstition is base enough to desire communion with the dead, is to my mind, at least, a far more shocking and melancholy phenomenon than the corrupt animalism of Mormons, comes nearer—if there is anything worse in it—to devil-worship than anything we have lately

seen in Western Christendom. To suppose for one moment that He who has the keys of death and Hades would permit spirits in discipline to break their captivity merely to gratify the inquisitive caprices of a handful of triflers, is a grave insult to His divine Majesty; and He is not more likely to spare, for the same unworthy reason, the saints who see His face and sing His praise. Of the invisible forces of the evil spirits, their number, their variety, their activity, their permitted liberty, we know hardly anything, but we are sure of this, if we are in any sense Christians, that they too have limits which they cannot transgress, and boundaries which they may not pass over. One hardly knows whether to smile with contempt, or to denounce with indignation what, if it is only a folly, is a very horrible folly, if it is a sin is a very ghastly sin indeed. It is not a pastime to be safely played at. No reverent Christian heart should risk what may seem a fantasy or experiment of science to do dishonour to the kingdom and supremacy of Christ. Christ will not answer a word to audacious attempts of this kind to force the barriers He has so mercifully imposed on us. If there does seem to be an answer—and I fear to provoke a smile by hinting the possibility of it—it must be either the impudent fraud of a designing charlatanism, or the awful voice of one whose works the Son of God took flesh to destroy.

There are speculative questions which Christ will not answer. One day His disciples asked Him: 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' He replied: 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' The most profound and reasonable and melancholy and pressing of all questions no doubt is this: 'How was it that when God saw that His world was good and fair, and had made man in His own image, and had placed them there to inhabit it, evil was permitted to come in and spoil that beautiful joy?' And the most honest, even if it is the most helpless and disappointing, answer to give is just this,—'We cannot tell.' The Bible does not profess to explain how evil came into the world. It here and there only drops hints about it. It does tell us that it is to be overcome with good, and that Christ took flesh to do battle with it; and that we are to help Him in the battle, and that at last all shall be reconciled, and the mystery cleared, and death conquered, and good all in all.

III. And once more, there are controversial questions which He will not answer, for it might be hurtful for us if they were answered. It might deprive us of a wholesome discipline for diffidence and charity. When the disciples asked the Lord, 'Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?' He distinctly declined to give them an answer: 'It is not for you to know the times and seasons,

which the Father hath kept in His own power.' And that answer is a key to other questions of great interest, of real importance, and about which we are sometimes tempted to think that, had we been told but a little more, much hot controversy, and much perilous division, and much weakening of strength in the face of the enemy might have been spared to the Church of God. If, for instance, but one clear direction had been given about the baptism of infants, there would have been no opportunity, or, as others would put it, no excuse for a separate body of Christians to whom the ordinance that we Churchmen love is felt to be an unreal and even a superstitious thing. If in the very important matter of Church government we had been enabled to gather, not only from logical inference, and not only from historical continuity, the rule or order most pleasing to God, and edifying for man, but from a distinct sentence of Christ's, the three last centuries of Church history might have been spared many a rent and tear in the robe of outward unity; many a blow and wound aimed by hot and even venomous tongues from brother at brother, and by saint at saint, might also have been spared us. The Head of the Church has thought differently. He sees further than we see, He looks deeper than we look. It is not for us to scan His purposes; it is for us to accept His discipline. If we go to His word to justify ourselves in arraigning honest brethren who differ from us and condemn them, He answers not a word. When we learn from His silence to decide modestly, to tolerate generously, to judge kindly, and to love sincerely, while firmly holding our own convictions, His voice is—and grace goes with it—'Peace be unto you.'

IV. Among the questions He consents to answer are these, and they are very practical, and we do not always appreciate His answers. They are questions about pain and about duty and about truth. There was a man blind from his birth, and the disciples, regarding him with a wondering pity, asked the Lord who had sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? They felt, as we are apt to feel now, that affliction of that kind must have the nature of punishment about it, and that all who suffer have deserved their suffering. The Lord's answer is most instructive: 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents'—in the sense they put upon it—'but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.' Pain, we see, is an opportunity from God to men of glorifying God by patience and unselfishness and cheerfulness and power of discipline through pain. We have seen this continually in others, and some day others may see it in us. As man's life draws towards its sunset a chill must often fall on what we call our happiness, through failing health and vanishing duty, and friends departing, and the dull opaque years that have no pleasure in them.

Then is the time to show that we can trust and bear and hope and pray; that we can love God, not only for what He has, but for what He is; that He is kind, not only when He gives but when He takes away. If the final discipline of the last years is the school-time for Paradise it is also the working of the works of God in the lessons it teaches to others who, maybe, could have learned in no other way. Those who stand by us and wait on us should be helped to discover as no books could teach them, that the life 'hid with Christ in God,' when all active service is a thing of the past, has its lesson of real heroism, and its revelation of the unchanging pity. There may be much uselessness in the restless goings to and fro of well-meaning philanthropy; nothing so glorifies God, or manifests His presence as the quiet and even joyful sufferings of His helpless saints.

He will answer us about truth in a degree which we must appreciate, and by methods which we must accept, and on conditions which we must observe. His promise is not to impart truth to us instantly or entirely or infallibly—if such a thing were possible—but by His Spirit to show us the way into truth, and to leave us there to find it for ourselves. The laws of thought cannot be repealed for any school of learners, or for any department of truth—they are unchanging and universal; nor will He help us to truth, if we choose to despise human aids or refuse to learn from our brethren, or think study superfluous and books a fatigue. Also there are moral conditions to intellectual progress. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' Christianity distinctly declines to be proved first and practised afterwards. Its practice and its proof go hand in hand, and its real evidence is its power.

To conclude: of this let us be perfectly sure, that, whatever may be Christ's silences to those who deserve them, He is never silent to those who seek His salvation and crave His grace, and bear His cross, and trust His love. It is easier for the sun to fall from the sky than for the Saviour to be hard or cold or indifferent to the humblest soul that really waits for Him. For a moment He may seem to be on a mountain, far away in the darkness, while we are tossed in the storm; it is night and Jesus is not with us, but the faintest cry of alarm or distress reaches Him while He offers His intercession for us; He hastens to us, though in a shape we do not always recognise, and in a way that we cannot instantly understand. Yet, whether He comes walking on the water over the midnight sea, or hails us from the shore, wearied with thankless toil, or from the grave-side speaks to us while the tears blind Him, it is no longer true of Him, it cannot be, that He answers not a word. The silence is broken and the voice whispers,' 'It is I, be not afraid,' and there is a great calm.

BISHOP THOROLD.

# SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

## Faith Triumphant over Refusal.

*But He answered her not a word.* S. MATTHEW xv. 23.

THE Gospel for this day shows our Saviour in an unwonted character. For once the Good Physician seems to be unwilling to heal. And yet this is the one narrative of the gospels to which we should refer for encouragement and comfort any one who was most fearful and most desponding. How is this? Whence this strange combination of repulsion and attraction, of a forbidding form and an encouraging sense?

I. Here is, first, the Saviour leaving the usual scenes of His ministry, and passing into a land to which he had as yet no message. As soon as He reaches it, He makes it plain that He did not come there for purposes of public ministration. He came there, I think we may say, for the sake of one soul. He would leave on record just one example of His care for those who were not yet His own. He would make one exception, even thus early, to that general rule which restricted His ministry to the Jews. Thus would He warn them that God's blessing might escape them altogether, if they gave not the more earnest heed. Thus would He show that He, the Almighty and All-wise, is not tied and bound by rules of procedure. When and as He will, such is the law of his working. And they who would find Him must watch for Him. Into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon He comes but now and then, or He comes but once; and they who have their griefs waiting for Him must lose no time in producing them while he is near. Soon the visit ends, and she who has procrastinated has lost the opportunity.

II. Again, how many are the heart's sorrows! How often are they connected with family life! How often is it the son or the daughter, the sister or the brother, the wife or the husband, whose pain or whose sin awakens in us that sense of need, that unrest, that disquiet, that longing and yearning, which is to be to us, if we rightly use it, the memento of the unseen and eternal! This Canaanite mother was brought to Christ by a daughter's misery. Happy they whose family sorrows bring them to the same place for healing; to the feet of Christ, to the throne of grace! Have any of you left behind you at home this day some object of solicitude or distress? The heart knoweth its own bitterness: but these things are of common experience: there are sad and aching hearts in every congregation; and One who is greater than the heart and knoweth all things sees them and feels for them.

III. But at all events, if the home be ever so bright, if the life be

ever so cloudless, there is a want deep down within, which is either keenly felt, or, if not felt, tenfold more urgent. If not for a child whom Satan hath bound, yet at least for ourselves we have all need to approach Christ with the prayer, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David. In some of us there is by habit a possession of the evil one; in all of us there is by nature a taint and an infection of sin. The very least of our maladies in soul is greater than the very greatest of our maladies in body or in circumstance. The very least of our spiritual maladies is an indisposition to duty, an averseness from God: could we name a disease more alarming or more deadly? What shall they who live and die in this state do in that world in which God shall be all in all?

IV. Thus then we have all of us occasion to approach Him who has turned aside to visit our coasts. We have all a malady which needs healing, and for which He alone, alone in heaven or in earth, even professes to have a remedy. The sense of utter unworthiness sometimes almost frames itself into a refusal and a repulse. We say perhaps to ourselves, It is true: I am rightly named: I am all this: I am vile, I am unholy, I am outcast and rejected, and I deserve it all: and then we go on to make a most opposite use of this knowledge to that which this miracle of healing should suggest to us. She, the Syrophœnician mother, accepted the description and yet turned it into a plea for grace. She made not the discouraging words a reason for departing, but rather a reason for drawing yet nearer and crying yet more importunately. And so ought we to do. The more we find ourselves or fancy ourselves repulsed, the more we ought to pray on and not faint. We have not heard, as she heard, from the Saviour's own lips, the words of refusal and of disdain: and yet those very words were taken by her as an argument for renewing her supplication. We do not believe that any real prayer was ever cast out for the unworthiness of the asker; and certain we are that, if our prayer be cast out, we have none else to go to: there, in Christ's presence, at Christ's footstool, yea, at the foot of Christ's cross, we may well kneel and kneel resolutely, saying, 'Lord, to whom I shall I go? Thou and Thou only, hast the words of eternal life. Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief.'

V. And doubt not, but earnestly believe, that, as this miracle describes us in some of its parts, so shall it describe us also in all. It was written to teach men this lesson, that refusals, even if they were uttered in words from the heavenly places, are at the very worst only trials of our faith. Will we, that is the question, pray on through them? If we will, then are we of those whom Christ hears; of those whom Christ regards as His faithful, His called, His chosen. No sounds ever reach us from on high, save those of encouragement, of

sweet and gracious invitation: we cannot say that Christ ever said to us, I am not sent to thee: but even if He did say so, still, by the example of this woman, it would be our duty to pray on and not to faint. There ought to be in our hearts, as in hers, an assurance of His character even deeper than any words; a conviction that He, whom the Holy Scripture sets before us as the Physician of the sick and Saviour of the sinful, must, whatever He may seem to say, have an under-purpose of love to all who seek Him. Even if there were any isolated and disjointed words to be found in our sacred book, which might seem to repel, we must nevertheless read them by the light of the general purpose, and be assured that He who came into the world to save sinners cannot really intend to daunt or to deter even the most sinful. God grant us all this faith beyond hope, or this faith against hope, according to our need!

DEAN VAUGHAN.

## Praying and Waiting.

*Great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* S. MATTHEW xv. 28.

THIS then is the end of all that to which all has been leading up, all the anxiety, all the effort, all the disappointment, all the pleading prayer—even a full and gracious compliance with her desire, a bounteous, may we not say even an overflowing return of mercy to her faith. It has indeed been a long and weary waiting. Again and again must her heart have sunk within her as each piteous entreaty seemed to produce no result, as she cried, and He, the Saviour, the only help in time of trouble, appeared not to hear. No words surely could have been more touching than those with which the afflicted mother first addressed Him,—simple indeed, and altogether unrhetorical, and yet all the more touching as the genuine outpouring of her heart's grief over one of the most terrible afflictions which could have befallen her child. 'Have mercy upon me,' she cried, 'O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' We, indeed, thanks be to God! can hardly realise this dreadful malady. Whatever may have been this particular form of diabolical malice, it seems to have passed away; but we know very well from Scripture, and from other sources, something of its results. Wild fury, the limbs racked, the body torn, all sense of propriety or even decency departed, strange unearthly yells—these and such as these were the torments which the awful indwelling of evil wrought, and easily we may imagine how the sight of this must have wrung the mother's

heart. True, in strictness, she had no claim upon the great Master's help. She was but a Canaanite, one descended from those idolatrous nations who formerly possessed the land. But it may be that she had heard of our Lord's mercy to others, as to the Roman centurion, and to the great multitude about Tyre and Sidon who, when they had heard what great things He did, came to Him; and therefore she takes heart and seeks Him in words strikingly resembling those of the Roman centurion, and with faith such as was scarcely found in Israel: 'Have mercy upon me,' she cries, 'O Lord, Thou Son of David.'

I. This is the gospel which the Church provides for this Second Sunday in Lent, the special season, as we know, set apart for penitence and for prayer. The Church would, as I think, impress upon us at such a time a most edifying and important lesson, namely this, the mighty power of sustained, and faithful, and unswerving prayer. We, most of us, I suppose, accept the theory of prayer. We can scarcely be Christians, scarcely even be Deists, without going through some form of daily prayer. We have all heard our Lord's strong and decisive words: 'Whatever ye shall ask in My name I will give it you'; 'Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,' or, 'If ye have faith, and shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall obey thee.' Or we read of the many answers to prayer which Holy Scripture records: the prayer of Jacob, the prayer of Moses, the prayer of David, the prayer of Daniel, the prayer of S. Paul, the prayer of the holy martyr S. Stephen. As a matter of argument, we Christians do not, for a moment, of course, deny the absolute necessity of prayer, and yet is it not true that many, to use the expression, in their heart of hearts, nevertheless do greatly doubt the efficacy of prayer, and that very few so completely trust to prayer as to be ready to rest upon it, to find comfort and relief from it in the day of anxiety and trouble, to look upon it as a real power, a mighty force within their reach which they have but faithfully to employ and all that they desire shall be given unto them?

Why then is it? Why, in the face of all these promises, of all these commands to pray, all these distinct—as they should seem—manifestations of the power of prayer, do we hesitate and hold back, and look upon it no doubt as a good thesis on which preachers may expatiate, but nevertheless as what is called a 'negligible number' in practical life? I believe that with many the reason is simply this: there appears to be, so far as they themselves are concerned, so far as they can see what follows others' prayer, little or no result. How often, for instance, have we striven against some fault which seems to injure, to mar our very life, which hinders grace, which makes us

sometimes even hate ourselves: irritability and petulance, the unguarded tongue, the harsh judgments and the harsh words of others, the impulse to evil, the suggestions of unbelief, the dangerous curiosity, the jealousy and envy, love of money, love of the world. Have we not, it may be, against such as these again and again resolved, and prayed and besought God to take them away from us; and yet still, as it seems, they cling on; again comes the temptation, again we yield, and all seems of no avail. Or it may be that some other earnest desire fills our heart; the recovery from sickness, it may be, of those we truly love, or the return of some prodigal, or the carrying out of some design or project for the glory of God or the good of our fellow-man; and we long and we pray, and we lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help, aud yet it comes not, and the heart is sick with hope deferred. Or consider, if you will, that great venture, if I may so call it, that great venture for which your alms and your prayers and your sympathy are so often desired, the conversion of the great heathen world to the knowledge of the wisdom of the one true God, and of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, that great consummation which all faithful hearts do so earnestly desire, 'when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.' How disappointing to the faithless heart, how hopeless do all our prayers and efforts seem! There it lies before us, almost, as it would seem, untouched; generation follows generation: we give our alms and we send out our labourers, and we pray again and again in our beautiful Good Friday Collect for 'all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics,' that God would take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart and contempt of His Word, and fetch them home, like His own true sheep, into the fold, and yet the long result seems still as far as ever away, and unbelievers rejoice and scoffers jeer, and covetous hearts draw close their purse-strings, and think that they have found a comfortable salve for their conscience in pointing to the failure of the undertaking.

II. Here, in the history before us, we have, I think, to all this, a full and sufficient answer. The Lord is not really slack concerning His promise. His promise will surely come. He is very nigh indeed to all who call upon Him, still standing by their side continually with eyes of pity and love. True, it may be that, as in the ship with His disciples, He seems to sleep, but oh! believe me, like the spouse in the Canticles, though He sleepeth, His heart waketh. As in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, He knows what He will do. Do you ask why God thus waits? The answer is simply thus: 'it is because in His love and wisdom He will prepare the soul for blessing; because He would make it such that, without danger to itself, it may receive that which it desires, yea, may receive more

than it either desires or deserves. And to this end He would draw forth from the human heart the very last particle of impatience and self-will; He would lead us, even as He led the Syrophœnician woman, to still more earnest prayer, to still deeper self-humiliation, to still more fervent faith, to louder calls for help. If the prayer were granted before all these were gained, it would, in truth, be found continually to be no blessing at all. Just as to give strong diet to a fevered patient would rather increase the disease, so, before the heart is truly faithful, truly humble, to receive what we desire would but intensify our presumption, and accomplish in us that greatest of all dangers—the sin of spiritual pride. DEAN BUTLER.

## IV. OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

### The Meetings with the Angels.

*And Jacob went his way, and the angels of God met him.* GENESIS, XXXII. 1.

I. WHATEVER may be thought or said of Jacob, there is no doubt he is an intensely human character. It is, I think, the first quite human character in the Bible. A living theologian has remarked that 'Abraham we feel to be above ourselves, Jacob to be like ourselves.' It is difficult to rise to the majestic conception of him who is called in S. James's Epistle 'the friend of God.' But Jacob's ambition, his temptation, his fall, his punishment, his remorse, his agony of faith, his purification by suffering, these are features of the common human life. Suppose there is some one who has in his heart a love of holiness, could he be true to it, who desires above all else to see the face of God, and yet who is not entirely sure of his own sincerity; not sure that he would have the grace of scorning a mean action, if there were a certainty of his gaining a privilege by it; who feels that he might be led into doing evil that good might come (which is so dangerous a course, because the evil you do is certain, and the good is only contingent and may never come to pass), that he might not rise above the level of public opinion, but fall below it, and possibly even drag it down; well, then, such an one is Jacob, a supplanter, and it will cost him a sore effort to win his soul's salvation.

It is a comfort, then, to think that when 'Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him.' You know he had just parted from Laban; he was returning to his old home. He was going to meet the brother he had offended. It was even then in Jacob's life that the angels met him, and it was the turning-point, I would say, of his life. For Jacob, as I have said, is one of those who begin badly, who do what is wrong, and have to suffer for it, and to suffer greatly; and yet he too had heavenly visions and spiritual strivings, and the end was that he became a prince of God.

II. It is told in the biography of the great S. Columba, the Apostle of Scotland, that one day when he was visiting one of his monasteries, a little boy, 'a poor little scholar of thick speech and heavy look,' came and touched the end of his robe, just as the poor woman in the gospel touched our Lord's. The people who saw him cried, 'Back, back, little fool!' But S. Columba turned and kissed him—he was trembling all over—then he made the sign of the Cross upon his tongue. 'This boy,' he said, 'whom you have so despised, let no man despise him from this day forth. For he shall be great, he shall grow in wisdom and in virtue; he shall be famous in all the Churches of Scotland, and God shall give his tongue the gift of truth and eloquence.' And long afterwards that little boy would tell this story, and when he died he too was honoured as a saint.

But the truth is, that to us all come heavenly visions, if only we knew them and would live as in the light of them. God has not left us to fight out our own battles. We are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses.

The high desires that come we know not whence, the strivings with sin, the longings for holiness, the visions of a peace beyond the stars—what are these but angels' voices calling you homewards to the presence of your Father and your God?

J. E. C. WELDON.

## Angel Help.

*And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.* GENESIS xxxii. 1.
*Are they not all ministering spirits?* HEBREWS i. 14.

I. A FEW words may be necessary concerning the angels themselves before we speak of their ministry. Our belief in the existence of such beings must rest chiefly, and almost exclusively on the Word of God. Perhaps an argument might be constructed on natural principles for the probable existence of good and evil spirits. Every other revealed truth has certain natural indications and proofs, more or less clear, which are accepted by thoughtful and thankful

persons as corroborative of the revelation. Possibly this also may have. A consideration of human beliefs in every age and nation, and a careful observation of human lives and experiences, might induce, in some uncertain way, the conviction or supposition that man is not so much alone in this world as he seems. But evidently such an argument never could be clear or strong. Happily there is no need to spend our thought in conjecture and speculation. He who has brought life and immortality to light by His gospel, has at the same time revealed an angel world. To a believer in Jesus Christ, the universe is far more than it can ever be to an astronomer without faith. It is a peopled universe. Away amid yonder starry heavens, and perhaps far beyond them, we know that there are 'thrones and principalities, and powers,' and 'might and dominion,' and the naming of high and glorious names. We know that there is a gradation in celestial as in terrestrial life, that there is rank and races among those bright spirits, and that they are all distinguished by the possession of great attributes. Taking the mere hints of the Bible (and compared with the bright reality they are evidently nothing more than hints), we have in them some very grand ideas.

1. The number of angels would seem to be very great. Our Lord is 'the Lord of hosts.' 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.' 'Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.' In his dream he saw the whole ladder bright with the moving throng. When the Lord opened the eyes of the young man who waited on Elisha in answer to the prophet's prayer, 'he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha.' 'Twelve legions' of the angels would have been at the Saviour's side 'presently' if He had asked them. 'I beheld,' says S. John in the Apocalypse, 'and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.' 'Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep': that is considered by many people to be but a poet's fancy, and yet read in the light of the Scriptures we have named, it is nothing more than a musical expression of God's fact.

2. The angels are swift as the flames of fire. 'They went every one straight forward. Whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not when they went.' 'The man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.' 'Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God.' The angelic movement, when need is, seems almost as quick as 'the glance of the mind, or the swift-winged arrows of light.'

3. They are also strong. With the swiftness of the lightning is

combined in them its awful strength. 'Bless the Lord, ye His angels that excel in strength.' 'And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great.' 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.' The strength of Samson would be no more to an angel than the touch of an infant would be to Samson.

4. They seem to be all young. We seem to see them clothed in the perpetual freshness and bloom of immortality. Although they sang together with the morning stars of creation, and shouted for joy long before man was created, decay has not touched them with a finger. They show no wrinkles of age, feel no weariness in service, carry on their faces the light of perpetual youth.

5. We must say, in a word, that they are evidently endowed with corresponding moral excellencies. They are called in more than one place of the Scriptures 'holy angels.' Holiness in them must mean a moral perfection suitable to their nature, just as holiness in us means a moral perfection suitable to ours. 'Holy angels' are angels who live and act in perfect accordance with the natural attributes they possess, and with the relations and circumstances in which God has placed them. Their strength never smites goodness, or supports injustice. Their swiftness never takes them away from God. When we see them they are always engaged about His worship or work—adoring, praising, waiting, serving. 'Are they not all ministering spirits?'

II. Probably the ministry of angels has at least the following characteristics

1. It is a ministry of guardianship.

2. It is a ministry of cheerfulness. Angels of light, they must cast around them some brightness as they go. They throw some flickerings of glory about our weary steps, and light up the landscapes and pathways of this mortal life as with escapings from the summer sunshine of heaven.

3. It is a ministry of animation. For we are not only cheered and lightened by them—brought into better spirits, as we say in our common speech, but without a doubt refreshed and invigorated by them in the inner man—in the very springs of our spiritual life.

4. It is a ministry of consolation.

5. It is a ministry of fellowship and convoy through death to life, and from earth up to heaven.

6. This whole subject shows in a very striking manner the exceeding greatness of the glory of Christ.

From the number of the retainers, and the splendour of the retinue,

we infer the glory of the prince. What then must be the glory of the King whom God hath set on his holy hill, when all these shining throngs are His willing servants—doing His commandments and hearkening to the voice of His word? How vast and bright His kingdom! How grand His royal state! How little does He need our service, while so greatly desiring it! How matchless His love and magnanimity in seeking for it, and in thus using the services of His noblest subjects, to regain and recover for Himself the love and the loyalty of some of the weakest and the meanest!

A. RALEIGH.

## Power with God.

(*Children's Sermon.*)

*As a prince hast thou power with God.* GENESIS xxxii. 28.

I. IT is a great thing to have power with men, if you are inclined to use that power rightly; how much greater to have power with God, especially when you consider that such power is sure to be used aright. I think any one who has power with God need not trouble much about getting any other power, for power with God is sure to lead to all other kinds of power which it may be desirable to have.

Who was it of whom it is said that, 'as a prince he had power with God'? It was Jacob. And, in token that he had this power, his name was changed. For the future his name was to be Israel, the very meaning of which is, 'A prince with God.'

Now let us see how this power was got. It was got by prayer. Jacob, you must know, was in great trouble. The cause of his trouble was sin. Sin, sin of our own doing, or of the doing of others, is the cause of all the trouble in the world. If there had been no sin there would have been no trouble.

But Jacob's trouble, in this instance, was caused by his own sin—sin of long ago. You must not think that, if you escape the consequence of sin for the present, you will escape altogether. It will find you out some time or another, and if not in this life, certainly in the life which is to come.

II. Jacob prayed most earnestly to God in his distress: he continued praying all night, he would not be turned away from praying; he would not, as we say, take No for an answer. God was pleased, in some way, to appear to him, and I daresay poor Jacob poured out a heart-broken confession for the wrong he had done, and of which he sorely repented. At first the Lord seems not to have listened, that is, He seemed indifferent; but it was only seeming. God is never indifferent to heartfelt sorrow and repentance. But Jacob was

determined in his prayer, and wrestled with all his might in it, exclaiming, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' And then, O miracle of mercy! He blessed him there. Thus Jacob became Israel, a prince with God; for thus it was that, as a prince, he prevailed with God.

A few years ago there was an awful storm on the east coast of England, and a ship was seen in great danger about a mile from the shore. The life-boat was launched, but, owing to some delay, there was great fear that it would be of little or no use. As it was nearing a well-known dangerous spot, the coxswain, that is, the man who has command of the brave band of sailors thus going forth to the rescue of their fellow-creatures, said, 'Mates, shall we turn back? It is almost certain death to go on. The ship seems to have sunk, and no doubt all hands are gone to the bottom.'

His comrades rested on their oars for a moment, inclined, it seemed, to act on his advice and go back. It certainly seemed an act of folly to persevere if there was nothing to persevere for. But one of the crew answered, 'As I ran to the cliff, I saw behind the hedge two ladies praying. I am a wild sort of a chap, yet I do believe that God hears prayer; we shall save some lives.'

This was enough. On the gallant life-boat ploughed its way through the dangerous breakers. But the ship had gone down; no sign remained either of her or her crew. The life-boat drifted four miles. In her drifting, however, she picked up, first one and then another, till eight were saved. Thus the shipwrecked crew were rescued, and lived to tell how their lives were saved in answer to the prayer of those Christian ladies. 'The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' Learn these words of S. James, and dwell upon them much, and then I have no fear but that you will joyfully put in practice the words of the Psalmist; and with a like result: 'Evening and morning, and at noon-day, will I pray, and God shall hear my voice.'

G. LITTING.

## The Defeat Under Sin.

*And as he passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.*
GENESIS xxxii. 31.

LET us endeavour to see the reason of these defeats under sin, which recur, again and again, in a regenerate man.

Perhaps many of us are not sufficiently alive to the truth, that the old sin of the character continues, and continues with unabated force, in the heart of a child of God.

# OUTLINES ON THE LESSONS

I. Sanctification does not consist so much in the destruction, as in the subjugation of sin. A new power is introduced, and the new power keeps down the old; but the old is there; and it is there like the coil of a spring. Like the coil of a spring, the more it is pressed down upon by the new principle, the more it re-acts to expand itself. If the new being is kept superior, then the old is kept confined; but if the superior force is withdrawn, or if it be settled down even for a moment, the old coil is there, ready at the least opportunity, to uncoil itself, with more and more of its ancient vigour.

To grow religious, consists not in having less sin, but in having more grace. To the end, the heart of the Christian is a bad thing, as bad as ever it was, 'desperately wicked; who can know it?'

You must lay that down as a first axiom.

There are two ways in which sin generally breaks out, and gets an advantage over a believer.

Sometimes, by an ingenious stratagem of the enemy, an entirely new temptation, or an old temptation in a perfectly new form, suddenly presents itself. You had been looking for danger on the one side, when at once it rises up before you on the other. Had you only been looking for it in that direction, it would have been nothing. It is its unexpectedness which gives it its influence and its success.

Dangers, troubles, sins very often rise in the exactly opposite quarter of the horizon to that in which we were looking for them.

More frequently, however, the old habit of sin recurs, recurs indeed sevenfold, but still the same sin. For remember, the same unclean spirit which had been driven out was with the other seven spirits when they came; and that original evil spirit was himself the eighth.

You may carefully build up the breach, where the enemy has once made an entrance into the citadel; but depend upon it, he will try the same spot in that wall again.

It is often said, that persons fail in their strong points. The experience which is to come out of this—the lesson of watchfulness—is quite evident. But why is the fact? A man's strong point—like a broken, mended bow—is generally where he has most erred, and has been the most restored. And a man's strongest point generally connects itself very closely with his own characterising evil tendency. The man of passion is the man of affection. The hot man is the feeling man. The strongly impetuous is the most earnest and useful. The truly courageous is generally the most exquisitely sensitive. The man who realises evil most, realises good most. The superstitious man is the man who has the strongest religious awe.

Hence, even by natural cause and effect, the sin is likely to crop out in the very best veins in a man's character.

II. But now look a little more closely at the history of a defeat.

All sin in a believer must arise from the reduction of grace. And whence that reduction of grace? From grieving the Holy Ghost. And whence the grieving of the Holy Ghost? An omission of something or other: prayer, the means of grace, some safeguard. And whence that omission? Carelessness. And whence that carelessness? Pride, always pride; self-confidence, self-exaltation. I question whether there is ever a defeat, which is not traceable, in its early origin, to pride.

And there was an inward defeat, before there was that outer and apparent one. A conviction was in your heart, and that conviction was allowed to speak in vain. The better part of you was weakened; conscience lay wounded; and wounded conscience has risen up and taken its revenge in a patent sin.

Let me guide you to another secret in your failures. It lies in its empty places. You can never simply expel a sin, you must introduce the opposite to the sin, and so occupy the ground. You can do nothing by a vacuum. Therefore it is that you are overcome. You are 'putting new wine into old bottles.' You are grafting a changed life upon an unchanged heart. You are trying to implant efforts to holiness upon nothing. It is simply impossible. You must fill the heart with good; then there will not be room for the sin.

You did not do this. Your time, your interest, your affections, your ambition, your thoughts, were not engaged enough. So you were overcome; and the chief conqueror was emptiness. Had Christ and things of Christ been where they ought to have been, you would not have fallen.

III. But now, let me suppose that one of you has just been passing under one of those defeats. What shall you do? Be assured of this, that, as not one victory, so not one defeat, no, nor a hundred victories, nor a hundred defeats, is the end of the campaign. That defeat that you have sustained is not final, it is one event in the war.

And more, if you will only let it be so, that defeat is part of your training. It may be converted into a positive good to your soul. God can and will overrule guilt to gain.

Let me see how. There is no sorrow for sin compared to the sorrow after a fall. It is not the sins which we did before the grace of God, but the sins after we have tasted peace, which make the bitterness of repentance. All the great recorded sorrows for sins are sorrows after falls. Therefore God has allowed this defeat to teach you repentance

Depend upon it, you wanted humbling. God saw that you would never be what you wished to be, that you would never be what He

wanted you to be, that you would never do what He wanted you to do for Him, till you were humbled. He saw that nothing would humble you but sin. Other things had been tried, and had failed. Therefore, God, as He is wont, took up His severest method, and let you fall, to humble you. He withdrew grieved grace, and He let you fall, that you might see where you are, and what you are.

Only go lower, consent to humiliation, accept that sin as a punishment. Yield yourself to the penitential feeling which is stealing over you. And thank God that He still loves you well enough to give you that miserable sense of sin and shame and nothingness.

IV. Get up from your fall as quickly as you can; the danger does not lie in the depth of a fall: but in the length of the time that we lie fallen. The deepest water will not drown us, if we do not stay in it; and the shallowest water will destroy life, if we do.

V. Look more to your union with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see what you are, and what you are without Christ. Now go to work more deeply. You have found out what a poor, miserable, weak thing you are; how can you ever be strong? Only in one way, link yourself to Omnipotence. You have found what a corrupt, bad thing that heart is; how can it be pure? Mingle the streams of your tainted being with the perfect purity of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see what a selfish, bad temper you have; how can you ever be kind? Be one with Him who is all and only love. You see what a wretchedly fickle, unstable mind you have. Go and identify yourself with 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'

VI. And see, and recognise, and adore, the wonderful provision which you have in a full, perfect Saviour. After all, you have found what you are at your very best, and you must end just where you began, nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ. On your part, only vile, on His, cleansing blood. On yours, all defeat, all defeat, and on His victory, 'with His own right hand and with His holy arm hath He gotten Himself the victory,' victory, complete victory, and that victory for you!

And what if this victory of yours, in its turn, enhance the glory of Christ? What and if it be, not in this world only, but for ever and for ever, that whereby Christ shall be exalted through your very degradation? . . .

Then you may go 'halt'; but 'the sun' will 'rise' upon your 'halting.' You may cross over the last passage more as a poor, forgiven sinner crosses, but your crossing will be a safe one. There may be a scar, seen on you, even in heaven, but, like those wounds of Jesus there, all beautiful, that scar will be radiant for ever and ever!

J. VAUGHAN.

# SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

## The Blessing of Jacob at Penuel.

*And He blessed him there.* GENESIS xxxii. 29.

MANY of us feel able to cast stones at Jacob. His conduct to his brother, though, indeed, one who so despised the birthright deserved to lose it, was beneath contempt. Towards his blind father he did a wicked perfidy, and if his mother pushed him into a conspiracy at which neither his conscience nor his will revolted, so much as the fear of being found out, a man in middle life can hardly be allowed to plead a child's suppleness. His nature, if crafty and reserved, was sinewy and firm. Let us admit, while we must be just to him (common as it is to be unjust) and while we refuse to measure a patriarch's conduct by an Apostle's standard, all the pathos of his after history, and the woeful abundance of his afflictions must not for an instant blind us to the badness of his sin.

But some go further, and find fault with God. They observe that the night on which he fled from his brother a ladder of glittering light arched over his pillows, and Jehovah spoke to his heart; they observe that wherever he went he found kinsmen, made alliances, and at last wealth. When Esau met him God shielded him; if trials came they were but the parents of blessing. He goes down into Egypt to recover and embrace his lost Joseph. By the flood of the tawny Nile he blesses Pharaoh and breathes out his soul in peace; and they say, 'We are "envious at the foolish," when we see "the prosperity of the wicked." They have "no bands in their death"; they are lusty and strong.'

Well, that difficulty is the difficulty of all men and of all times, and I suppose if we had to choose between being so jealous about God's righteousness that when we fail to see it we are troubled, or, being so indifferent to it, and, indeed, to anything about God at all, that we hardly care to ask if He 'judgeth the earth'; we would rather have the earnest, nay, the fierce cry of a blistered spirit that must see God's righteousness or perish, than the sleek composure of a vapid soul whose God, such as He is, never troubles his thoughts.

Now, the answer to such a complaint, so far as it deserves and claims an answer, is virtually contained in the fact of my text. Whatever Jacob was, or was not, whatever God is, or is not, God blessed Jacob; and wisdom being 'justified of her children' we feel that Jacob deserved to be blessed because God, who blessed him, knew him. God blessed Jacob.

You ask, 'Why did He bless him?' I say, for the best of all reasons, because He loved him. 'Jacob have I loved,' said the

prophet, being the spokesman of God. And why should He not love him? Do we love any one but thoughtless persons? Let us be fair to what was good in him while stern to what was bad. He had ambition. Do you despise ambition? It is the leverage of human progress. He had vast tenacity of purpose. Has that no charm for the strong? His whole nature was saturated with tenderness. The years seemed but as a few days for the love he bore Rachel. As he lay dying, he remembered how he buried slighted Leah and he thought of the place where she slept. Before Esau came he protected himself against him with ingenious precautions and judicious diplomacies. When he came near nature was too much for him, and he forgot the separation of years in a passionate burst of love. With all his faults Jacob is indisputably one of the most affectionate characters in the Bible, and God, who is Himself love, valued love in him.

But again, do you ask, 'Why did He bless him at Penuel?' Because he asked to be blessed, and his desire for it constituted at once his worthiness and his capacity; and if you further inquire how God blessed him all his history afterwards is the key to the answer. He began the blessing by the agony of prayer, and He completed it with the discipline of sorrow, about which discipline, and all that it proposes and implies, I will speak.

I. And, first, life being itself a blessing, nay, to one who believes in God, and hopes for Him, the greatest of blessings, God makes it yet a bigger blessing by ordaining for it a fixed plan. Every man has a plan of life made for him; and God, who is just, as well as wise, endows him with gifts for fulfilling it, and remembers the circumstances under which he must fulfil it. It may be a patriarch's or a peasant's; it may be the life of a quiet student in the cloister, or the campaign of a great conqueror on the fields of war; it may cast its shadow along before agitating the boy's heart with thoughts of coming greatness, or it may slowly and imperceptibly unfold itself as the leaves in the greening spring; but I say every man has a plan marked for him in life by God, and it is his duty to discover it and his safety to fulfil it; and if you tell me about the tyranny of circumstances and ask me how you can escape them, I say, if circumstances crush feeble men, strong men conquer circumstances, and fortune is at the feet of the strong. But, if God is Sovereign, man is free. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' And it does not follow because God has for every man a plan in life, and the best possible for him, and gives him all the chances he needs for executing it, that therefore, as a matter of course, it is executed, whether all of it or much of it, or

quite in the way that God prefers, or by the instruments that He can sanction.

II. God uses circumstances as His angels and voices to us, and He has special epochs and crises in which He visits our souls and lives.

There are three chief landmarks of spiritual life in Jacob's history, perhaps in every history, though we may not all of us have learnt about them yet.

The first was at Bethel, where Jacob became really conscious of God, and thought, in his present distress, he could not do without Him. Characteristically enough, he made a bargain with God, in which he took good care to have the best of it; and God, in His infinite goodness, ready, almost, to have our love at any price, does not reason with Jacob nor dissect his curious motives; but He treats him as a wise and kind father treats a somewhat selfish child—suffers him to have his say and to receive his promise, telling himself that he can wait; that time is on his side, and that his son will learn.

Then there is the second epoch, when the necessity of provision from God becomes transfigured into the craving after intercourse with Him; when the soul does not so much seek God's gifts as the vision of His glory, asks not to eat His bread, but to see Him and live. It is the baptismal fellowship quickened into conscious life: 'Tell me, I beseech thee, Thy name; I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' 'And He blessed him there.'

Then comes the final change. 'Fear not to go down into Egypt; I will go down with thee, and will also bring thee up again; and Joseph will put his hand on thine eyes.' Yes! there is an Egypt, too, for us; the spirit-land on the brink of the river, where we shall meet our Josephs and Benjamins, and the goodly company gone on before; and then the voice of the archangel will bid us rise and go in; the resurrection will welcome us into the Land of Promise.

III. In conclusion, let us borrow from Jacob's history a significant lesson for youth and middle life and old age. The secret of a noble youth is eagerness without impetuosity. Jacob was eager; but, in his eagerness, he thought to make a short cut to his journey's end, and it turned out, as short cuts usually do, a very long one. Could he have waited for his birthright instead of snatching at it, it would soon have come to him through his brother's levity and idolatrousness, and then all that sin and sorrow and parting might have been spared.

By all means desire good things and great things, only be content to wait for them; and be sure that if you will not wait, you will be compelled to practise waiting in a very painful way. It is a good thing to wish to get moral problems settled, to have an impatience at evil and evil people, to have a great hope of progress, and to put

your own shoulder to the wheel of the world to help it to move faster, nay, even to be in a sort of hot despair when it seems to be going on so slowly that it is almost standing still. The world is often better for a little wholesome anger. The fatal malady of the soul is coldness.

But also learn to trust God with His own world and His own creatures. Have enthusiasm. We cannot have too much of it; but let it be regulated enthusiasm, and not merely the stormy passion of a hot egotism. Ask as many questions as you please; but remember it is only in action and obedience that answers come to us. Most of all, remember Him who has said, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.' Like Jacob by the brook, seek Him, and speak to Him, and wrestle with Him, till He becomes your friend. Jesus of Nazareth is the true and blessed resting-place for childhood with its innocence, youth with its aspirations, manhood with its activities, and age with its ripeness. Your wish for Him is the proof that He is seeking you; only say to Him, 'Be my friend,' and His answer will be, 'I ever have been'; and so He will bless you there. Then, in middle life, we will try to learn the hard lesson of concentration without absorption. God has His discipline for Jacob here also, and for us likewise. He sends for Rachel, and she dies by the well at Beer-Sheba. Joseph is sold into Egypt. By the lonely well of Beer-Sheba the prosperous, middle-aged man would give half he possesses for one hour of sweet Rachel's company, or for one glimpse of the ruddy cheek of his lost boy; but Rachel neither comes nor sends; when Joseph sends he has waited so long that the sands are fast running out.

And yet it is not all discipline. Middle age is full of an inexhaustible beauty, if rightly interpreted and wisely used. There is an infinite variety to keep life from monotony, and thought from stagnation—duties which, when they are honestly done, gladden our own life and enrich the generation in front. It has been well said that if our danger is to be one-sided through the steadiness of our concentrated efforts, our safety must be manifold and many-sided while clinging fast to our particular work. There may not be much poetry in middle life. If less attractiveness than in youth, there may be less dignity than in age, and, perhaps, this does not so very much matter. But middle-age is the August of life, when the harvest ripens and the purple grapes ask us to pluck them. If we drop much, we have plenty with which to restore it. Our questions are wiser than they once were, and they have less sharpness about them. If our difficulties are still serious, like Jacob, we have seen God, and we know that though the well is deep, the Rock of Ages is below. So He blesses us there.

Then, once more, after the heat and burden of the day the wilderness is past and the shadows fall. The perfection of old age is wisdom without cynicism, and a faith in the purpose of God which deepens and widens with the years. To look around on the scenes which we are so soon to leave and still to admire and enjoy, and, if possible, improve them; to be interested in the young who will soon fill our place, dissect our character, and inherit our labours, not, perhaps, with too much respect and sympathy; to believe in the future which we shall have no more opportunity of helping; to grow in spiritual vision even if our intellectual force decays; to spread charity; to accept consolation; to avoid a morose solitariness; to welcome all opportunities of making others happy—here is the glory of old age, when the grand hope of immortality sweetens and dignifies it; when, as with Jacob, we say cheerfully, 'I am to be gathered to my fathers'; or, with Simeon, in the full light of the infant Christ, joyfully, 'Now let me depart in peace, for I have seen Thy salvation.'

BISHOP THOROLD.

## V. OUTLINES FOR THE DAY ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

### Legion.

*And Jesus asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion; for we are many.* S. MARK v. 9.

I. MAY we not say of spiritual dangers, 'Their name is Legion!' Satan is constantly changing his form of attack. Temptations will not always take the same shape. Satan will even be transformed into an angel of light. His tactics are 'Legion!'

What then? Are you going to give up the fight? Nay, surely not! Are you going to prove false to your great Leader, under whose banner you were called to serve? Think of yourselves rather as soldiers in a weary desert warfare—such warfare as our British soldiers have been called upon, of late years, so frequently to wage.

Think how they have been called upon to face fearful odds, to undergo privations and hardships such as we can hardly imagine even, face to face not with one foe only, or one danger, but foes and dangers whose name is Legion—the treachery of guides in a trackless

desert; a fierce burning sun under which 'the whole head grows sick and the whole heart faint'—thirst; the blinding, choking dust raised by a thousand camels; forced marches, and sleepless nights, and harassed the while by a fierce, fanatical foe.

II. Never let us grow faint-hearted because our difficulties and our temptations are legion. Look upon your own hearts as one of those desert entrenchments held by our troops in Egypt. The heart is attacked by hosts of evil. The fierce sun of temptation beats down upon it, it is in itself treacherous, and so you must watch it well. Our temptations are legion. Then we must not attempt to fight them all at once; that would be beating the air; but we must take them one by one.

We must concentrate all our efforts upon one sin, our besetting one; and when in God's great might we have conquered that, attack another.

We must use all the help God gives us; especially must we seek fresh strength in our Communions. These must be regular, not fitful. We must kneel at the altar humbly, crying that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, and then rise up to go and fight again against a legion of foes, saying: 'The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge.'

J. B. C. MURPHY.

## Two Kinds of Clothing.

(*Children's Sermon*)

*Be clothed with humility.* 1 S. PETER v. 5.

I. FIRST of all, let us think of the clothes which God makes for his beautiful world. He clothes the grass of the field. Go and look at a pasture-field in the country, and you will see that God has clothed it with a beautiful green robe, and every night and morning the green is all trimmed and spanglerobed with dew-drops. Or there is another field, blazing with yellow buttercups and white daisies, that 's the white and golden clothing which God has given to it. That same God dresses the woods in the springtime with a hundred different shades of colour, and clothes the earth beneath with the purple robe of wild hyacinths.

And God clothes the beasts and birds and gives each exactly the sort of dress which he requires. You have all seen the mole-hills in a field, and sometimes you have caught a glimpse of the mole himself. Well, God has clothed him in a dress like black velvet, which is just fitted for his home underground: and He has formed his feet like shovels, so that the mole can dig a tunnel through the earth. The animals

which live in cold regions have a warm clothing of fur, and those which live among snow and ice are white, so that their enemies may not easily see them. Do you know that the bones of birds are hollow? God makes them so that the birds may be able to fly lightly in the air. Some animals, like the tortoise and the snail, have a suit of armour to wear: that is given them because they cannot move fast, and escape from their foes. So God clothes the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air.

II. Now let us think about ourselves. In the Bible we hear of two kinds of clothing, the best and the worst. S. Peter says, 'Be clothed with humility'; that 's the best clothing. In the Hundred-and-ninth Psalm we are told of a wicked man who 'clothed himself with cursing as with a garment.' That 's the worst clothing. The best suit of clothes for a child of God is humility, for Jesus says, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' There are some kinds of clothing which we should cast off as soon as possible. If any of you have put on bad habits, such as pride, or falsehood, or bad talk, or any other sort of bad dress, you must change your clothes. Cast off the old garment, and go down on your knees, and ask God for Jesus Christ's sake to give you a new dress. God alone can make you clean, God alone can give you a garment of righteousness.

H J. WILMOT BUXTON.

## Meditation on Holy Things.

*Meditate upon these things.* 1 TIMOTHY iv. 15.

WE sometimes ask ourselves, 'Why are the fruits of our Tree of Life so poor? Why is heaven, which is so near, since all of us may enter it, so far away because only the fewest of us do?' It is appalling to look out upon the world of Christendom, and on the nominal Christianity of our own nation. Human life even in Christian countries is like a great sea strewn with shipwrecks, in which few of our frail barks seem to reach that haven in which we should be all anchored. Nineteen centuries of Christianity, and only think of the want, the woe, the rejection alike of religious and moral obligations, the criminality and vice, the stolid indifference to all divine truth of whole masses of the population, both rich and poor! But it is hardly less distressing to see religion, even in the religious, so pitifully unfruitful, and to recognise in nominal Christians so few who live noble, much less saintly, lives. It is sad to find in the vineyard of the Church itself, not the rich purple vintage of Ephraim, but only the thin and acid gleaning of the grapes of Abi-ezer. Why is the religious standard so far from high and heroical, so mildewed with

torpor, so bitter with party factiousness, so cankered with compromise and convention? Why are most of the Christians whom we know so little of Christians, that a man may profess to be a Pharisee of the straitest sect of our religion, and yet we are not able either to admire, or to respect, or even to trust him, and in hours of despondency and anguish we would often far sooner go for help and sympathy to a mere honest worldling than to some religious partisan?

The quick recurrent waves of our business, of our desires, even of our religious functions and observances, ebb and flow with each returning day, too often only like a troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt. We leave ourselves no time for quietude, no time for meditation, no time to dwell upon eternal things. We think of so many things that we leave the one thing needful unconsidered. We spend so many hours in sleep, so many at meals, so many in amusement and talk, in the earning of our daily bread—how many for quiet thoughtfulness, how many for God?

Now the duty which I would fain urge on you to-day—on myself and on you—is the duty of detachment and recollectedness, of finding time, of making time—which is the time least lost of all—of making time for quiet, earnest thought on the things which concern our soul.

I. Consider, first, how often Scripture dwells on the duty, the happiness, the necessity for meditation. We are struck with the calm and peaceful beauty of the character of Isaac. Is it not explained when we are told that it was his custom to walk out to meditate in the fields at eventide? Does not Joshua say of the book of God's law: 'Thou shalt meditate therein day and night; that thou mayest observe to do what is written therein'? Are not the sweet psalmists of Israel full of the sweetness of this duty? The whole of the One-hundred and-nineteenth Psalm is one rapturous meditation on the law, the covenant, the statutes, the ordinances, the commandments, the testimonies of God: 'I will consider Thy testimonies.' 'Lord, what love have I unto Thy law! All the day long is my study of it.' 'Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than the aged, for they are ever with me.' Does not S. Paul say to the Philippians; 'Whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise—think on these things?' And does not he write to his beloved Timothy, as in my text: 'Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them'? And our blessed Lord Himself, our one perfect Example, so strongly felt the necessity for some margin to His life and that of His disciples that He retired to quiet places, and to the bleak summit of the hill, to pray and to be alone with God; and He said to His disciples, in pity for the distraction caused by daily publicity: 'Come ye yourselves apart unto a desert place, and rest a while.'

II. You will find the same need insisted on by all the greatest souls. Meditation has ever been the chief source of calm to the purest and heavenliest spirits. It was his mighty loneliness, and the hours that made him lean with thinking, that produced the awful concentration of Dante's song. The *Imitation of Christ*, which has been a little book so useful to thousands of souls, was written, at least in part, by a very quiet peaceful brother of the common life, whose chief happiness it was to be found *in angulo cum libello*—'In a quiet nook with a little book.' We marvel less at Shakespeare's insight when he tells us of the

'Sessions of sweet silent thought.'

And Milton, while yet a youth, sings—

'. . . . . Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired.'

Or turn again to the same duty, to Christian history. How touching are some of the stories about the old hermits. Two of these agreed to read and think over the Scriptures. They began with the Thirty-ninth Psalm: 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.' 'How far have you got?' asked one of them of his friend some time afterwards. 'I have not got beyond that verse,' replied his friend; 'I found it so hard to practise that it has occupied me ever since.' And, again, when some trifler asked an old Carthusian monk how in the world he managed to get through his time, he was rebuked with the quiet answer, 'I have considered the days of old, and the years of ancient times.' There would not be so many fretful and discontented, nor so many shallow and fussy souls, if men retired more often from the storm and stress and poor vulgarities of life into that awful solitude which may be to ourselves as the very audience-chamber of our God.

Let us then make it a Lenten duty—perhaps to some of us a quite new Lenten duty—to remember to realise that kingdom of God within us by finding each day as a matter of duty some quiet time for serious thought; in the beautiful words of St. Bernard, let us 'silver our wings,' let us experience the blessedness of the promise: 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove which is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.' The Eastern dove, settling among the dusty potsherds of the village, dims its purity and brightness, but when it soars up again in the blue and dewy air, it reflects the sunlight from every iridescent plume. The reason why Christian lives are so poor and soiled, so dim and

dusty is that they never soar, but are content to grope in the darkness and to crawl about the dust.

ARCHDEACON FARRAR.

## Esau's Birthright—Irreparable Follies.

*He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*
HEBREWS xii. 17.

THE main point on which the writer to the Hebrews fixed the thoughts of his readers is the *irretrievable consequence* of Esau's one rash, unworthy, unfaithful act. He found no place of repentance. He could never to any purpose again change his mind. He had by that act set to his seal that God's foreknowledge was accurate, His choice righteous and true. The birthright which he had made of so little account was gone for ever to another. It is the type of our irretrievable acts, but in an especial way of irretrievable choice made under such circumstances as Esau made his choice—in the heat and weakness of youth. A single heedless act with unalterable results.

I. Some light is thrown on what it means by that glimpse of the divine foreknowledge which is known to us, though it was not known to Esau. God had chosen Jacob and rejected Esau, not arbitrarily, but foreseeing, as He must foresee in every human life, the issues of the two characters. That wild, heedless, passionate act was not a mere heedless act. It was an index, a faultless index of the mind from which it sprang. He 'despised his birthright,' otherwise he would not have yielded at once to the temptation to sell it. Jacob, on the other hand, for all his faults, could look forward, could trust God's promise, could hold a purpose.

How often and how often is the story repeated! The character of Esau, drawn in the bold natural outlines of a simple age, is one that cannot fail to find its likeness among the young. Bold, vigorous, his father's favourite; fond of outdoor life and adventure, generous even in his after years, as we see from his meeting again with Jacob. Here, surely, was the making of a fine character. As human eyes would choose, here rather than in Jacob should we look for the father and founder of a great people. Yet here even as in Saul and David we should have been wrong. Something is wanting; something that cannot be replaced. And sooner or later the want shows itself—stamps itself indelibly in an act of folly which cannot be undone.

'He found no place of repentance.' No; but there is a place of repentance if we can only antedate that experience. Those thoughtless, irretrievable acts are not sudden, inexplicable bolts from a clear

sky; the thunderclouds gather long before. You know the thoughtlessness which leads to loss of innocence, to the missing of golden opportunities. Is it too late to pray any to look into their hearts and, in God's strength, to take into their hands the guidance of their lives? The past, in one sense, cannot be undone. Yet believe that the moral of this story is never exhausted—never, while life lasts. In spite of everything the birthright, in many senses, in its best sense of all, is still yours. Yet even in that sense too you may cast it away.

E. C. WICKHAM.

## Prayer.

S. MATTHEW XV. 21-23.

THE epistle for this Sunday is, like that for the previous week, plainly and simply didactic, and intended to enforce those ordinary Christian duties which are the firstfruits of holiness, although they are too often neglected. In the gospel our Lord is shown 'destroying the works of the devil' in the case of the Syrophœnician woman, as in that of last Sunday His defeat of them in His own Person is recorded. It is a striking lesson on the value of prayer. Prayer should always accompany fasting; a lesson to be especially remembered at this season.

(*a*) Prayer should always accompany fasting.

(*b*) We should pray with undoubting faith.

Christ seems to have wondered at the faith of none except Gentiles —*i.e.* of this woman and of the Centurion (S. Matt. viii. 10). The faith of Gentiles was greater than that of Jews.

(*c*) Prayer ought to be persevering.

'Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'

'It is recorded, that a certain soldier, much loved by his general, asked an apple of him as a token of his regard. The general, firstly, gave him the command of a fortress, then presented him with a war horse, and then with splendid armour. Still the soldier begged for the apple, which at last was given to him. Had it been given at first he would have lacked the other gifts. So was it with this poor woman; Jesus, by keeping her waiting continuously, added to His gifts. He gave her faith, stability, humility, and love, first, and then granted her one petition after all.'

(*d*) Prayer ought to be humble.

'Saint Ignatius was once travelling with many of his companions. Each of them carried on his shoulders a little bag containing what was most necessary to him; a good Christian perceived that they

were tired, and was inwardly moved to relieve them by carrying their baggage; he offered his services, and conjured them to accept his offer, as if he had demanded a great favour of them; they yielded to his prayers. When they had arrived at the hotel where they were compelled to rest, the man who had followed them, seeing that the good fathers set themselves at some distance from one another to pray, fell on his knees at their example, and kept in that position as long as the fathers were praying. The space of time which they had fixed to devote to the exercise of prayer having expired, they rose, and what was their surprise to see that this man without letters and little instructed had prayed like them for a considerable time. They expressed this to him. "What have you done all this time?" they asked of him. His answer edified them much, for he replied, "I had nothing to say but: Those who pray so devoutly are saints, and I am their beast of burden; Lord, my intention is to do what they do, I say to you all that they say." This for the rest of the journey was his ordinary prayer, and he attained, by this course, to a sublime degree of prayer.'

S. J. EALES.

## VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

*The Dogs and the Crumbs.* MATT. XV. 27.

DR. MOFFAT used to tell the story of his first missionary sermon: 'It happened, one evening, soon after I began my journey up the country, that I found my way to the homestead of a Dutch Boer, of whom I begged a night's lodging. It was nightfall, and the family must soon go to rest. But first, would the stranger address some words of Christian counsel to them; might they hear what he has to say? Gladly I assented, and the big barn was resorted to. Looking round on my congregation I saw my host and hostess with their family of three boys and two girls. There were crowds of black forms hovering near at hand; for this surly Boer had some hundred Hottentots in his service, but never a one was there in the barn. I waited, hoping they might be coming. But no; no one came. Still I waited, as expecting something. "What ails you?" said the farmer; "why don't you begin?" "May not your servants come too?" I replied. "Servants!" shouted the master; "do you mean the Hottentots, man? Are you mad to think of preaching to Hottentots? Go to the mountains and preach to the baboons; or, if you like, I'll fetch my dogs and you may preach to them!" This was too much for my feelings, and tears began to trickle down my cheeks, for my heart was too full to hold.

After a pause I opened my New Testament, and read out for my text the words, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." A second time the words were read, and then my host, vanquished by the arrow from God's own quiver cried out, "Stop; you must have your own way. I'll get you all the Hottentots, and they shall hear you." He was as good as his word. The barn soon filled with rows of dark forms, whose eager looks gazed at the stranger. I then preached my first sermon to the heathen. I shall never forget that night.'

*Divine Protection.* S. Luke ix. 37.

God protects and defends His people now, as He did in the days of the Apostles. We, their spiritual children, are inferior to them in all saintliness, but He does not therefore cast us out. Jesus took His chosen, perfect disciples into a high mountain apart, and there disclosed to them the mysteries of grace; but He did not the less descend into the plain, to give there His instruction to the people.

*Repentance.* S. Luke xv. 7.

Thinkest thou that God, who gave thee grace to repent thee of thy sins, will not pardon them after thy repentance?

What do you suppose is the object on earth most attractive and interesting to heaven? An angel coming down here, what would he care for your palaces and pyramids, your works of art, military achievements, wonders of legislation, or even your books—books of philosophy, science or song? What would he care for your great men, whether distinguished for thought, or action, profound intellect or eloquent speech? What would he care for all these things? Nothing. But if he saw a human spirit panting for truth, pressing after God, fearing the darkness, conscious of its sin, breaking with contrition, earnest in prayer, solicitous for guidance—why, to him such a sight would shine like a star.

He that repents every day for the sins of every day, when he comes to die, will have the sin but of one day to repent of. Short reckonings make long friends.

True repentance is never too late, but late repentance is seldom true; for here our sins rather leave us than we them, as Ambrose says; and he adds, 'Woe be unto them whose sin and life end together.'

# ILLUSTRATIONS

A Jewish Rabbi exhorted his disciples to repent the day before they died. One replied that the day of a man's death was uncertain.

'Repent, therefore, every day,' said the Rabbi, 'and then you will be sure to repent the day before you die.' You who are wise will know how to apply this.

'Unless you commence at once that work which has been so long neglected, unless now you begin to repent, you must surely perish.' Begin! begin to repent! This brings another and an overpowering thought. Begin to repent! When? In a month, in a week? Foolish man! Foolish woman! This night thy soul may be required of thee.

It is easy enough to sorrow for sins in the night of adversity; so Saul (1 Sam. xv. 24); so Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 27). But to sorrow for sin in the day of prosperity, that is the true repentance which God loves.

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty
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